

SIGHT AND SOUND

PUBLISHED BY THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE
SUMMER 1948 VOL. 17 NO. 66 PRICE 2s. 6d.



JOHN GRIERSON · MATTHEW NORGATE · FORSYTH HARDY · GEORGES SADOUL

“IMPACT ON FILM”

The quarter-page announcement inserted in the last issue brought enquiries and subscriptions from Cambridge, Liverpool, Dublin, Stornoway, Sheffield, Nottingham and Düsseldorf!

“IMPACT ON FILM” has aroused interest which we intend shall be maintained.

Our first book, “This Film Business”, contains authoritative and entertaining essays, rather nicely illustrated, by Dilys Powell (whose “What Makes the Movies?” will sting and infuriate quite a lot of people); John Halas and Joy Batchelor on “The Approach to Cartoon Film Scripting”; J. Clifford King’s exclusive interview with René Clair; Clarissa Churchill on Duvivier; Marguerite Bruce, with a profile of Margaret Lockwood that is, to say the least, unexpected; and others.

“IMPACT ON FILM” is 2/2d. per copy by post and 6/6d. for three books. Further titles to be announced here in November. More details from:—

Editor : PAUL SHERIDAN

23, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

DOCUMENTARY *film news*

The Factual Film Monthly

Subscription 12/- per year

Post Free

Film Centre, 34 Soho Square, London, W.1

Editorial Board:

Stephen Ackroyd, Donald Alexander, Max Anderson, Edgar Anstey, Geoffrey Bell, Ken Cameron, Paul Fletcher, Sinclair Road, John Taylor, Grahame Tharp, Basil Wright

EDITOR Davide Boulting

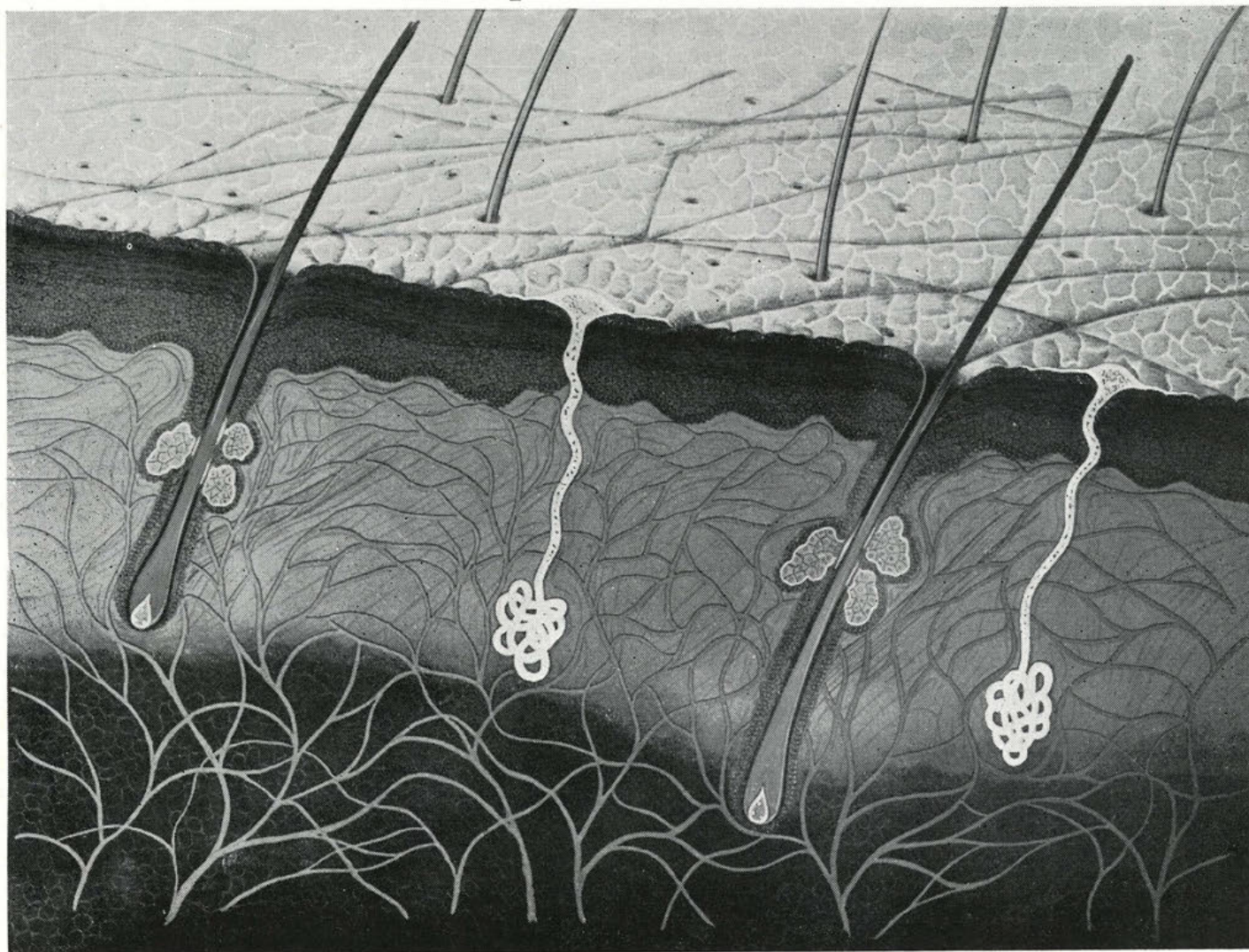
ASS. EDITOR Jane Davies

G-B INSTRUCTIONAL

present...

'Elimination'

FIRST OF A NEW SERIES OF FILMS
ON ELEMENTARY PHYSIOLOGY



'Elimination through the Skin' from the new G.B.I. Film **Elimination**

A study of the structure and functions of the four routes through which waste and surplus substances are eliminated from the human body—the skin, kidneys, lungs and colon. (Two versions: with commentary and silent).

From **LOOK AND LISTEN**:—

'It is scarcely surprising that G-B. Instructional who have long excelled in the production of biology films and in the art of animation, should have given us a film which, for technical perfection and for clear but scientific exposition, may serve as a model of its kind . . . From now on, it will be as foolish to ignore this film in the teaching of physiology to the upper forms of secondary schools as, say, to omit the globe from the geography lesson'



For full details of the Elementary Physiology Series now in production and more than 300 other classroom films write to :—
G.B. Education Division, 80-82, Regent Street, London, W1

A Company within the J. Arthur Rank Organisation

YOU WERE NEVER LOVELIER
 GOOD MORNING DOCTOR
 MUCH TOO SHY
 THEY ALL KISSED THE BRIDE
 ADAM HAD FOUR SONS
 MUSIC IN MY HEART
 THE ADVENTURES OF MARTIN EDEN
 SAHARA
 DANGEROUS BLONDES
 MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN
 PENNIES FROM HEAVEN
 ONE NIGHT OF LOVE
 THE BEAUTIFUL CHEAT
 ANGELS OVER BROADWAY
 IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT
 LOST HORIZON
 THEODORA GOES WILD
 THE KING STEPS OUT
 MURDER IN TIMES SQUARE
 THE DOCTOR TAKES A WIFE
 TOO MANY HUSBANDS
 YOU'LL NEVER GET RICH
 CRIME DOCTOR
 THE DOUBLE PUNCH
 BLACK SHADOW
 ROGUES GALLERY
 FALLING STONES
 PROMISE ME
 FORES AHEAD
 THE ANCHOR
 WRONGLY ACCUSED
 FALSE ALIBIS
 ARMS AND DANGERS
 HE STAYED FOR BREAKFAST
 HE SNOOPS TO CONQUER
 THE DEVIL COMMANDS
 THE MISSING JUROR
 THE IMPATIENT

A Hire Service

giving of the

Best in

16 m.m.

Sound Films

Westerns, Cartoons, Comedies, Sports,
Screen Snaps, Documentaries, Tours,
Royal Wedding Procession, etc., etc.

Sole Distributors for
COLUMBIA PICTURES CORP. FILMS
in 16. m.m. for U.K.

Write for Illustrated Catalogue to Dept. S.S.

**WIGMORE FILMS
LTD**

35. BEAUFORT GARDENS, BROMPTON ROAD, S.W.3

Tel. KENSINGTON 1600 and 4300

WF15D



16 mm. PRECISION BUILT PROJECTORS

IMPERIAL

750 WATT
SILENT

Intending purchasers of 16 mm. projectors should carefully study the many outstanding features of AMPRO projectors which cater for all requirements in VISUAL EDUCATION. For instance, the IMPERIAL model is the ideal projector for silent films and is to be recommended for Classroom use.

PREMIER - 20

750 OR
1,000 WATT

The PREMIER - 20 Amprosound has many unique advantages. Simplified film threading, extremely quiet operation, brilliant screen illumination and complete all-round accessibility coupled with clear natural sound reproduction. Whilst primarily for sound-film, the Premier - 20 can also be used for showing silent films.

By reason of their universal popularity AMPRO PROJECTORS are exported to all parts of the world, with ever increasing numbers available in Great Britain.

You are invited to write for descriptive literature

Manufactured in Great Britain by Kelvin, Bottomley & Baird, Ltd., at Glasgow and Basingstoke, by arrangement with the Ampro Corporation of America.

SIMPLEX-AMPRO LTD.
167-169 WARDOUR ST., LONDON, W.1

The "CARPENTER" 16 mm

*The Projector you will be proud
to own*

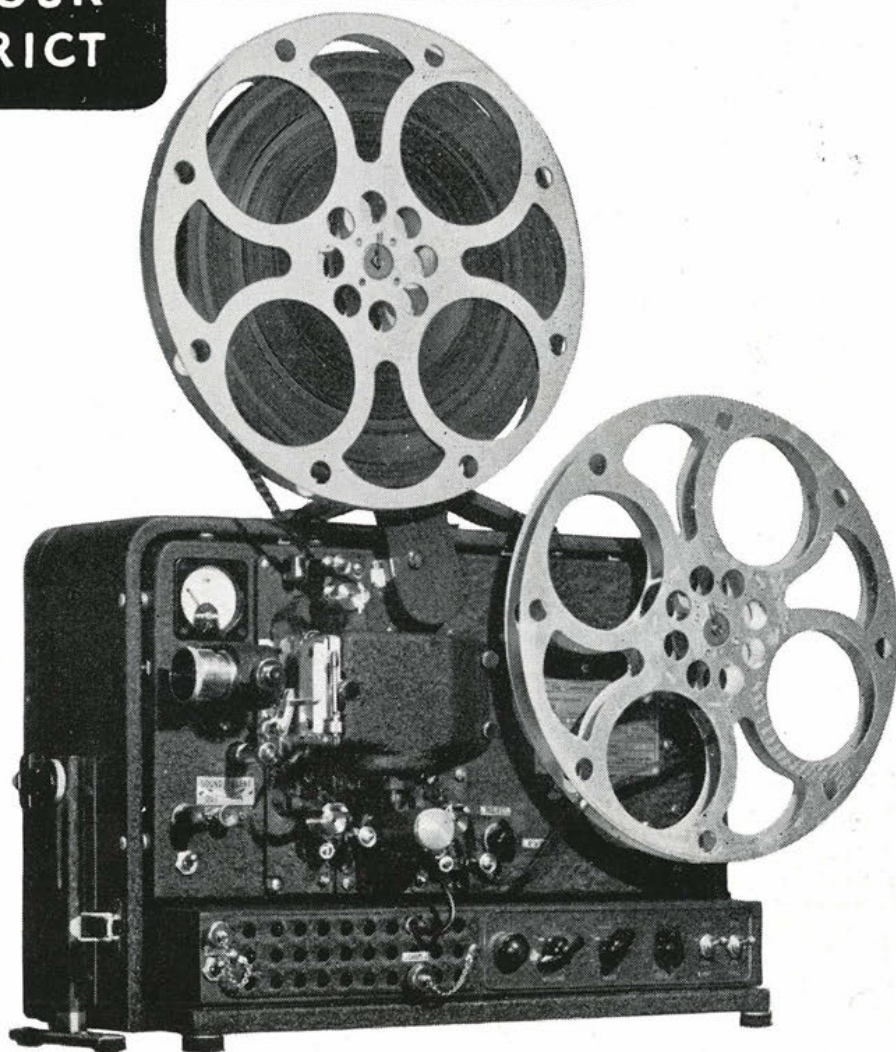
For the CHURCH, SCHOOL
HOSPITALS
ROAD SHOWS
and the
HOME

**WE HAVE
AN AGENT
IN YOUR
DISTRICT**

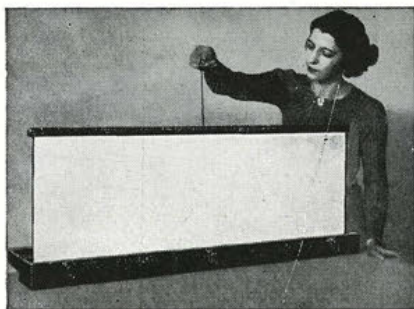
Write or call

**CARPENTER
AND
RICHARDSON
LTD.**

**BERESFORD AV.
WEMBLEY
MIDDLESEX
ENGLAND**



SELF-ERECTING SCREENS in Rexine-covered Box



"Witelite" Surface. Entirely non-directional—equally brilliant from any angle. Rendering of half-tones is exceptionally fine. Washable, will neither fade nor crease.

Bead Surface. Intensely brilliant. Colour-corrected. Beads will not rub off and are fine to avoid 'graininess'.

Available in sizes 40 × 30 ins. and 52 × 39 ins.

Roller Screens also available, range of sizes up to 12 × 12 ft.

Write for detailed list to

ACTINA

10, DANE STREET, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1

Telephone: CHAncery 7566/7

CINE SCREENS

EVERY KIND,
AMATEUR AND
PROFESSIONAL

E. G. TURNER,
43-47 Higham St., Walthamstow, E.17

DAWN TRUST

An educational and religious film trust, registered as a charity with an associate membership spread throughout England

FILMS FOR SALE

16 mm. Sound or Silent

Home or Export

"Mine's a Terrier"	...	...	...	...	...	£6
"Cats"	...	...	...	...	...	£6
"Ancient Stones"	...	...	...	...	...	£10
"A Letter from Goathorn"	...	...	...	...	...	£30
"How to Play Cricket"	...	...	...	...	...	£21

And many other new or second-hand films

Religious Films for Sale

EQUIPMENT for SALE

Victor Projectors in Stock. Dawn Oehmichen with Arc in Stock. Fibre Boxes.

DAWN TRUST, Aylesbury, Bucks. Tel.: 649

A "NEW LOOK" FOR THE CAMERA-MAN

Britain's latest Studio Camera has a reflex look-through. The camera-man can thus see the picture in the viewfinder all the time he's shooting. This is just one of the many advantages which Vinten's half a century's experience in making the world's best and most modern moving cameras is bringing to British film production today.

Photo—courtesy of
Nettlefold Films Ltd.



Vinten

EVEREST CAMERA

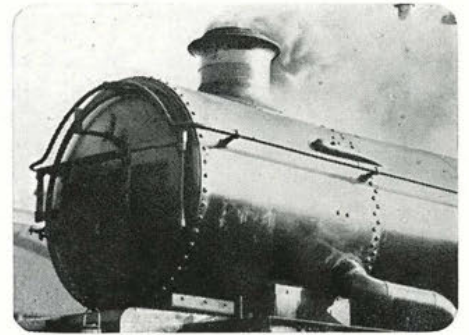


W. VINTEN LTD., North Circular Road, Cricklewood, N.W.3 Telephone: GLAdstone 6373

FILMS FOR THE CLASSROOM...



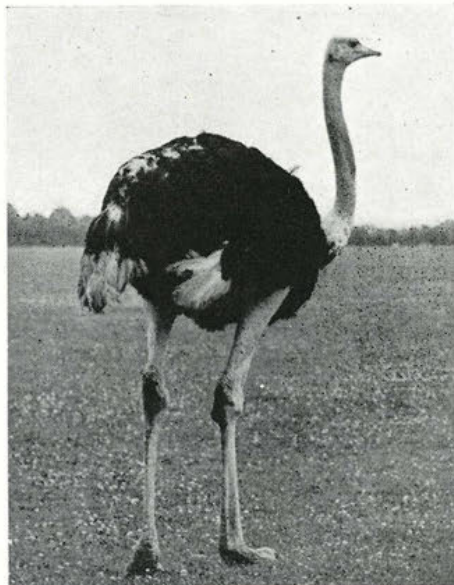
The Fireman. Age group 9-12. Running time 11 minutes.



The Engine Driver. Age group 9-12. Running time 9 minutes.



Suez Canal. Age group 12-15. Running time 9 minutes.



Ostriches. Age group 5-9. Running time 3 minutes.



Cape Town. Age group 12-15. Running time 10 minutes.



B.I.F. now have over one hundred titles in their library of educational films. Write for catalogues and supplementary lists to:

BRITISH INSTRUCTIONAL FILMS LTD.
IN ASSOCIATION WITH **PATHE PICTURES**

Mill Green Road, Mitcham, Surrey

NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY

of the BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

NEW and forthcoming additions to the Loan Section include:

Edwardian Newsreel. A film record of the reign of Edward VII taken from contemporary films in the Preservation Section of the Library. 35 mm. and 16 mm. sound. 55 minutes. *Ready Now.*

Critic and Film Series No. I A. Jympson Harman of "The Evening News" discusses an episode from "Great Expectations." The stress is laid on editing and camerawork. The treatment is very simple. 35 mm and 16 mm. sound. 6 minutes. *Ready September 1st.*

Critic and Film Series No. II Dilys Powell of "The Sunday Times" deals with a sequence from "The Overlanders." The part played by cutting and sound-track is emphasised. The treatment is simple. 35 mm. and 16 mm. sound. 15 minutes. *Ready October 1st.*

Critic and Film Series No. III Basil Wright, documentary producer and critic, discusses "Odd Man Out," with illustrations from the film. The devices used to "put across" the mood of the picture are particularly noted. The treatment is fairly advanced and assumes some preliminary knowledge of film technique. 35 mm. and 16 mm. sound. 35 minutes. *Ready November 1st.*

Write for a Catalogue, details of hiring rates (non-theatrical only) and other particulars to

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

164 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, LONDON, W.C.2

VISUAL AIDS IN SCIENTIFIC & AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

I.C.I. has prepared the following lists of its productions. Copies will be sent to educational authorities who apply on their official notepaper.

I.C.I. MEDICAL FILMS

I.C.I. AGRICULTURAL & VETERINARY FILMS

I.C.I. FILMS FOR SCHOOLS

I.C.I. AGRICULTURAL FILM STRIPS

Write to the I.C.I. FILM LIBRARY,
Imperial Chemical Industries Limited,
Nobel House, London, S.W.1



★ *Films available in 16mm. sound on free loan to approved borrowers.*

DANCE-KAUFMANN CYCLEFILMS

on
Kinetic Theory of Gases
Composition of Harmonic Motions
Propagation of Waves
Reflection and Transmission of Light
Theory of Alternating Currents
Theory of Induction Motors, D.C. and A.C.
Generators, Transformers, Rectifiers,
Cyclotron, etc.
Various Aspects of Mechanical Science
Illustrations from Nature

"For the first time it is possible for the Science Master to control the film, instead of being completely at its mercy." [Mr. F. A. MEIER.]

also

CRAFTFILMS and CRAFTCYCLES (DRYAD-DANCE-KAUFMANN)

on
Weaving a Waste Paper Basket
Weaving a Scarf on a Roller Loom
Binding a Book

also

STRIPSLIDES
FILMSTRIPS ON SCIENTIFIC AND
ENGINEERING SUBJECTS

Write for full information to :

DANCE - KAUFMANN LTD.

18 UPPER STANHOPE STREET, LIVERPOOL 8

ALLEN & UNWIN

The History of the British Film, 1896—1906

RACHAEL LOW and ROGER MANVELL

The first reliable account of the first ten and formative years of the British Film. The authors deal first with the film as an industry—the early companies, studios, financial organization, methods of exhibition; and secondly as an art, covering extensively both subject-matter and technique.

Original research for this authoritative book was done by Rachael Low under the aegis of a committee consisting of Cecil Hepworth, as chairman, George Pearson, Ernest Lindgren and Roger Manvell.

100 fine photographs include unique early stills, posters, portraits, pictures of studios and travelling cinema shows.

100 illustrations. Royal 8vo. 21s. net

40, MUSEUM STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

"when the wheels slow down"

Although the Transport Act is now law, it will be a long time before long-distance road transport is taken over. The short-distance hauliers are to be left to operate within a narrow radius. The Road Haulage Association has made a film to show what difficulties the hauliers are likely to meet, and how the public will be affected.

When the Wheels Slow Down gives a startling picture of life in Britain in the 1950s. It goes into the offices of the new transport bureaucrats; on to the roads where vehicles will be delayed by red tape; into the shops where deliveries fail to arrive; into the homes where larders are empty.

This forceful and direct 8-minute film, designed and produced for the 16 mm. market, has never yet failed to amuse, and at the same time provoke discussion, whatever the political opinions of the audience. The Road Haulage Association invites readers of *Sight and Sound* to see *When the Wheels Slow Down*. Copies (sound only) will be lent free of charge, on application to:

The Public Relations Officer, Road Haulage Association Ltd.,
146, New Bond Street, London, W.1

Telephone : MAY 9050

COPIES LENT FREE

Studio One

Adj. Oxford Circus Underground, W.1.
GERRARD 3300

SEASONAL PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING FRENCH BRITISH & AMERICAN FILMS

Continuous Daily 12.45-11 p.m.; Sundays 4 p.m.-10 p.m.

PRICES:

2/3 ; 3/6 ; 4/6 ; 5/6 ; 7/6 ; 8/6

Bookable : 5/6 ; 7/6 ; 8/6

Special Terms for Parties

Studio Two (News) Theatre in same building

Price 1/- in all parts

AN INTERNATIONAL FILM REVIEW PUBLISHED BY THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

CONTENTS

PROSPECT FOR DOCUMENTARY: John Grierson	55	DENMARK BEHIND THE POLAR CIRCLE: Ragna Jackson	90
THE FILMS OF ARNE SUCKSDORFF: Forsyth Hardy	60	THE WORLD LIKES AMERICAN FILMS: William Robertson	91
AUSTRALIAN PRODUCTION: Eric Goldschmidt	64	MAGIC CANVAS: Oswell Blakeston	93
THE ARGENTINE CINEMA: Matthew Norgate	65	CRISIS OVER FRANCE: Georges Sadoul	94
LUMIÈRE—THE LAST INTERVIEW: Georges Sadoul	68	DECLINE AND FALL OF COMEDY: John H. Winge	96
FILM APPRECIATION: H. D. Waley	70	ON FILM CRITICS: D. A. Yerrill	98
MARIO SOLDATI: Vernon Jarratt	71	BRITISH FILMS OF THE QUARTER: Arthur Vesselo	99
REPORT ON GERMANY: Egon Larsen	75	THE STATE INSTITUTE OF CINEMA AND THE FILM ACTORS' THEATRE IN MOSCOW: Catherine de la Roche	101
A LETTER FROM AMERICA: Herman G. Weinberg	80	NEW DIRECTORS—WHERE FROM?: Harold Leonard	103
THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL FILMS IN BRITAIN: Dr. Brian Stanford	82	BOOK REVIEWS: Arthur Vesselo, S. Oreanu, M. K. Grindrod, F. E. Farley, Norah Lewis, Herman G. Weinberg, Ragna Jackson, Joyce Cuttle, Jennifer Smithells, and others	104
THE CHURCH, THE CINEMA AND CENSORSHIP: Father John A. V. Burke	85		
MEXICO'S CHAPLIN: Betty Ross	87		

COVER STILL: *The Red Pony* (Republic)

TO READERS

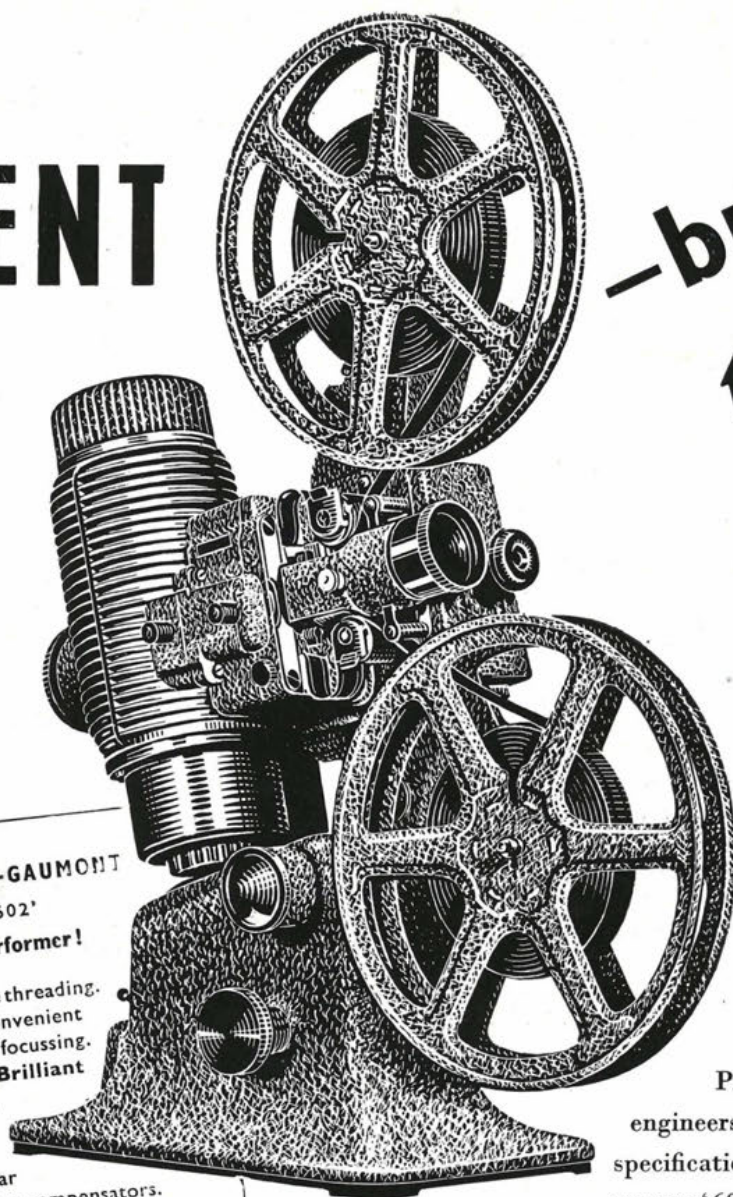
The utmost latitude is given to contributors to SIGHT AND SOUND and, therefore, the opinions expressed in signed articles are not necessarily in agreement with those of the British Film Institute. The COPYRIGHT in all articles published in SIGHT AND SOUND is reserved to the British Film Institute and reproduction without permission is therefore expressly forbidden.

Editorial and Publishing Offices: British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2., England. *Telegraphic Address*: BRIFILINST, WESTCENT, LONDON. Published on the first day of November, February, May and August each year. SIGHT AND SOUND is sent free to members of the Institute. The annual subscription to SIGHT AND SOUND alone is 10s. 6d. including Postage.

Advertisement Offices: E. E. Preston, 69 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4 (*Telephone*: Central 3952; *Telegraphic Address*: "EDPRESS, FLEET, LONDON"). SIGHT AND SOUND is a member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

SILENT

—but
the '602'
speaks
for
itself!



BELL & HOWELL-GAUMONT
SILENT '602'

An Outstanding Performer!

Easy to use. Simple threading. One hand tilt. Convenient controls. Two-way focussing. Built-in pilot light. **Brilliant Steady Pictures.** 750 or 1000 watt lamp. Magnilite condenser. All gear drive. Side-tension compensators. 'Bloomed' lens (interchangeable). Double shuttle-tooth movement. **Complete Film Protection.** Exclusive Safe-Lock sprockets. Improved ventilation system. New type safety shutter. **Versatile.** Still projection. Reverse action. Sound and Silent speeds. Power rewind. Universal A.C.-D.C. **Easy to Maintain.** Metered Lubrication. All parts readily accessible. Cool-base lamp for easy replacement.

Produced by the skill of British engineers working from the latest American specifications this new Bell & Howell-Gaumont SILENT '602' is a startling advance in 16 mm.

silent film projection. Every feature has been designed, built and tested to make its contribution to an ideal projector not only for schools, homes, clubs and societies but also for factories, workshops and centres where films are increasingly used for training and information. How can you get to know all the facts about this brilliant new Bell & Howell-Gaumont product? Ask your nearest G. B. dealer or write to G. B. Equipments Ltd for a copy of the new '602' illustrated booklet. Demonstrations can soon be arranged without obligation through your nearest G. B. dealer.

Bell & Howell - Gaumont

...and for 16 mm.

SOUND FILMS...

the history making '601'

The already famous Bell & Howell-Gaumont 16 mm. SOUND Film Projector has set a new high standard in 16 mm. Sound film projection. Any G. B. Dealer can now let you see, hear and operate this splendid machine.



Mother

Documentary Unit India

PROSPECT FOR DOCUMENTARY

What IS Wrong and Why

By

JOHN GRIERSON

WINIFRED HOLMES HAD A PIECE in here recently on "What's Wrong with Documentary" and spread as much gloom over the subject as the Wee Free Church at the Longchamp Races or, now I come to think of it, vice versa. However, her

analysis was done with such a wealth of consideration that we shall have to take serious notice of the thirty-one separate counts which she enters in her bill of complaint.

The style of the argument is a matter of interest all by

itself. Woman-wise, she tends, as James Bridie would say, to "proceed by bumptious assertion". She says flat out that documentary is now dull, etc. etc., advancing no evidence. She then assumes the truth of her assertions. She then enters, in usual female fashion, into disquieting but richly speculative detail as to why the devil got into the Gaderene in question and drove it to the sea. We have all been there before.

The main point to take at the beginning, I would think, is that while there may be incidental weaknesses, documentary today is as big as a house and bigger than anyone had, at the beginning, any reason to expect. It represents on its Government side alone by far the biggest single operation in short film production in the world. Like any other founded house, it has had, and may be now having, its pedestrian stretches, but there is nothing that cannot be cured by (a) a few first-rate films, (b) two or three first fine careless raptures by new talents, and (c) a certain reorientation of documentary policy in the light of its present-day circumstances.

WAR AND PEACE

Mrs. Holmes' first question is the sixty-four dollar one itself: "Has the great fulfilment of the war years been maintained? Have we lost our proud position of supremacy? etc., etc." There can of course be a great deal of argument about that "fulfilment" of the war years. I find myself one of the scurvy people who doubt if there is ever any real "fulfilment" in war-time: in films or anything else. One might as well talk of "fulfilment" in a lunatic asylum. We all had the time of our lives, of course. We had much to do, much support in the doing of it, and money to burn for the actual making of pictures; and it is perfectly true that some fine and exciting films emerged like *Target for Tonight*, *Western Approaches*, *The Way Ahead* and *In Which We Serve*. But the area which the documentary approach to films illuminated was necessarily limited. While there was at times great and poignant record of the human spirit, a lot of it was just cops and robbers.

The ultimate limitation of war as an inspirer of documentary is that the themes were to a large extent "found" from a dramatic point of view. They were physical, with most patent death and disaster for a violence-loving medium to play with; and, in the nature of things, the world wore its humours and its sorrows on its sleeve. The achievements of documentary were not, therefore, inconsiderable, but they were, shall we say, relatively easy achievements, involving less of that hard discipline, mental and creative, which in other times than war finds the drama under the less garish stone of peace.

ADMIRERS ARE SIDELINES

Mrs. Holmes talks of present day documentary as "lacking in spirit and inspiration" and says that the old-time "warm admirers" of documentary are looking to other producing countries for evidence of a living tradition. It may be so, but these "warm admirers" should make up their minds what they are looking for. If they are looking for documentary at its brightest they will certainly find it in Rossellini, but it is still a documentary engaged in the more violent issues of war and its aftermath, with its *Simple Case* still to come. If they want a documentary illuminating and serving the processes of peace, they will do best on the old stand, watching what Brian Smith does with *Your Children's Sleep* and wondering where better and bigger we go from here. In any event, I doubt if documen-

tary, rooted as it is, and with purposes which have little to do with the snobbism which has grown up around its successes, needs those warm but weather-cock "admirers" who are so quick to look for other lights on the horizon. If there is one trouble about documentary, it may well be that it has got caught up so much with its "warm admirers" that there may be a tendency to confuse the making of films and the active serving of public purposes with the literate but only incidental chatter of the side lines.

I don't think the distinction between war and peace dismisses Mrs. Holmes' argument about there being now a shortage of vitality—not by any means. I merely suggest that one cannot define the shortage by comparing peace phenomena with war phenomena. I could reverse the argument and say that a lot of things I always understood to be basic in documentary consideration tended to have no place at all during war-time, and not least in Britain. I give one instance of the sort of failure I mean. When I went over to France after the invasion, to see what some of the units I happened at that time to be responsible for, were doing, I found them all enthusiastically up at the front making interminable shots of the fire and the fury and being as brave as all getout. At one point I shoved a unit back into Caen to make a picture of what happens when a town has to start literally from scratch again. It seemed to me a chance in a life-time to see what a community really is when the earth itself has first to be sweetened before it can be lived on.

But the boys' hearts were back with the shot and the shell and they finished up with a damned dull picture of a graveyard. I don't blame them, but remembering Caen, I wonder if we are not on richer ground with Graham Wallace's little film on *A School in Cologne* than with very many of the films of the days of our "fulfilment".

The strength of Mrs. Holmes' case is not therefore, I think, in the relative weakness of present-day documentary, but in what may be said about its absolute weakness in present-day terms. Here we are, going through other crises, facing other issues, national and international, involving peoples' lives all the more deeply and all the more certainly now that the simple and all-absorbing threat of sudden death is removed. Are we, in fact, making as much of the new, and to my mind, much more exciting opportunities as we did of the war opportunities? Here I believe Mrs. Holmes has something, because I don't think we are. My analysis, however, would be different.

PEAKS OF MATURITY

One reason presented for "what is wrong with documentary" is that the "best senior directors" are going out. It appears that some of them got so excited with the big canvasses which the war gave them that they arrived at a "peak of maturity" which only the studios could serve. I say of this that documentary is not weakened but strengthened if the large potential of the studios and of their theatre distribution has come within its grasp. On the other hand, it may be said that the "best senior directors" have, in fact, abandoned documentary for some other kind of picture which is not documentary, as they have abandoned their direct relationship with the public service. I wonder in that case if documentary as an instrument in the public service is weakened by the loss of people who don't want to serve it anyway. One can only wish them luck among the Henry Fiftths, the Hamlets and all the other evidence of summer nights.

It may be that Mrs. Holmes is a little restive about the possibility of drawing this conclusion because she excuses

her studio-bound "best directors". They have been "forced out by high production costs"; and this one, frankly, I cannot follow because they have surely gone from the frying-pan into the fire. They have also been "forced out by the economic situation". Here it is either a question of the small pays of documentary or of the incapacity of the documentary business to discover films for them to do. In the first case, I can only reassert, as ever, that documentary pays compare very badly with studio pays but that, for those who find it an honourable vocation, pay is a secondary consideration, and that it is in any case a damned sight better than big-time school-mastering, which is also an honourable vocation.

In the second case, viz., that documentary has not found the jobs for the "best senior directors" to do, I say simply that the facts are against this thesis. It has more jobs to do today than ever before, more in fact and more in potential. We will run to 200 films or thereabouts this year. They are not big canvas jobs, though some of them might be, but when did the size of the canvas decide the quality of the artist? If it were otherwise, the greatest painter in history is a man in Brussels whose name I cheerfully forget.

OLD DOORS . . . NEW DOORS

I conclude accordingly that the weakness of documentary is not to be decided by the inclination of its one-time servants to go for either the big money or the big canvas. Documentary may well be the stronger for losing those who no longer by nature belong to its particular purposes and disciplines. These are not necessarily more worthwhile than the purposes and disciplines which now engage their attention; it is simply that they are different.

Mrs. Holmes has a particular word in this regard for the painful business of working for the Government. These "senior directors" of ours have been driven out, it seems, not only by consideration of the big canvas and the big money but also because Government sponsorship has frustrated them. "The committee system adopted by the Government", it appears, "tends to kill initial enthusiasm and blur the original clear outline of the film". If I may take mean advantage of a cross-reference I would add that she opposes the horrors of "a dull public film . . . a piece of dreary propaganda" to the "fresh and exciting work of art which opens new doors into truth and understanding".

I take it, therefore, that the weakness of documentary is due to the frustrations of the Government sponsorship which have driven the bigger boys out to bigger canvasses and bigger salaries and the "fresh and exciting air" which, as we all know, the studio doors open to "truth and understanding". This, if I may say so, is a good one.

GOVERNMENTAL REALITY

Whatever there is of documentary today, it has for the most part come from government sponsorship. Nor is the process by which the "original clear outline" of the film is systematically blurred by attendant government committees, easy to recognise. I have seen a lot of films grow and not a few of them, I am sorry to say, have grown like Topsy and every which way because there was no such original clear outline to blur. Many have even got good that way though perhaps, according to some methods of calculation, wastefully, as for example the Flaherty films which he proudly asserts grow on the screen in a sort of wrestling relationship between the maker and the raw material of his rushes, until presently, like Jacob himself, "the sun rises upon him and he halts upon his thigh".

It is in fact unreal and sentimental to talk of the creative process as involving original clear outlines and both Plato and Bergson would support Mr. Flaherty a good part of the way. They would certainly laugh at the dreamboy-out-of-the-sky conception of inspiration; they would certainly emphasise the need of labouring long over the material before the clear outline can be expected; and they might even join Aldous Huxley in saying "ventre a terre, head in air, the centaur is your only poet" and ask how, without systematic contact with reality, reality can ever be found.

. . . . MEANS PUBLIC PURPOSE

It is accordingly misleading to put up Government sponsorship as a blurring villain which wages fearful war against the clear-eyed seers and their presumably inevitable works of art. *The plain fact is that the Government wants pictures which fulfil the public purpose.* For sure it wants public films; but equally for sure it does not want dreary pieces of propaganda, or its public purpose would not be served. A main point to remember is that the Government did not always want films. It was taught by the documentary people themselves to want them because the documentary people saw the possibility of combining their interest in the medium with the Government's interest in public service. Documentary itself, as a form, was a product of this relationship and of this framework of reference. Its strength grew as it prevailed on the Government to take chances on the creative potential of the realistic film and, equally importantly, as the Government people prevailed on the film people to take the subject matter of public purpose seriously. There grew up a partnership in which subject matter was emphasised from one side and the qualities of the medium from the other, and the weight of documentary grew with it. It never, in fact, had any other weight as a developing concern. Here lay its economy; here lay its character as a creative effort; and here lay its concerted and cumulative power as itself a public service, combining educational and æsthetic functions and serving both education and art by the very combination.

What now is Mrs. Holmes saying as she attacks Government sponsorship? Is she saying that Government sponsorship was wrong from the beginning? If she is, I say that there would have been no documentary today without it and I go further and say that even if it had been possible economically to develop documentary without it, documentary would have been a piece-meal and shallow affair in comparison with what it actually is. Here I need only cite the example of the documentary film in America. If Mrs. Holmes is saying that Government sponsorship was wonderful in the old days—not to mention the days of our "fulfilment"—but now no longer is, she is in fact saying that an old partnership, in which a true understanding between the partners existed and from which good things came, has now gone sour.

Here we had better take close note. I think something indeed has happened to the partnership. But I don't believe for a moment the fault is all on the side of a group of "inauspicious" characters representing the Government departments who want "dull public films" and "dreary pieces of propaganda" in high contrast to another group of children of light who want "truth and understanding".

PINNING DOWN THE FILM-MAKERS

Mrs. Holmes presumes, and she may be right, a fearful inequality in the partnership. If the Government sponsors

want it this or that way, she seems to say, that is the way it has got to be; and wanting the wrong things, there is nothing for the children of light but to get out and go elsewhere. But that does not speak of a partnership: it speaks of an attitude on the part of the documentary directors toward their Whitehall partners, in which they no longer presume, as they certainly once presumed, to think to the Whitehall problem and add their imaginative sense of the medium to its illumination. And if they have lost the position of equality which once made the partnership a real one, could it possibly be because they no longer think sufficiently to the Whitehall problem and so find themselves by default where we always knew we would finish, if we failed in this regard: behind the camera shooting to the orders of others? If this is true, Mrs. Holmes has revealed a position of real fundamental weakness in documentary today. Equally, she has revealed that it is not a question of crying over the philistines who now dictate our picture-making, but a question rather of pinning down the picture-makers who have neglected their intellectual fences and seeing to it that they catch up with the realities on which the original partnership was based and on which any creative partnership must continue to operate.

This obviously is a large question and, I believe, goes to the heart of the matter. I will only say of it now that I wonder sometimes if we who did so well once with the social reform perspectives of the 'thirties—the slum clearance, the problems of nutrition, etc., etc.—have sufficiently bothered our heads to take documentary excitingly into those other perspectives of economic reorientation and reorganisation, of scientific development and technological revolution, which are as much the reality of today, and therefore as much the deepest concern of government, as the problems we helped the government to illuminate in previous times.

Mrs. Holmes says that maybe—and she goes on to assert that she doesn't believe it herself—maybe "documentary has fulfilled its functions and may now die a quiet death in a departmental corner". I am glad she has knocked that sally down—though I wonder why she ever put it up. Patently there is more for documentary to do, not less, as government initiative grows; patently public illumination on all questions of citizenship becomes ever more necessary to an orderly society; and patently we have scarcely touched the surface of the vast awakening which is taking place in the hearts and minds of men all over the world. If documentary were to "die in a corner" in the middle of a world-wide renaissance involving every aspect of the life of nations, peoples and races, the heads of its practitioners—and of its "warm admirers" too—ought certainly to be examined.

THE SPONSOR RELATIONSHIP

I am inclined to believe, therefore, that documentary is not weak for the reasons set out by Mrs. Holmes.

It is not weak because there was a maturing of talent in war-time which peace-time opportunities cannot now fulfil. On any consideration of what peace is about, and what the world to-day is about, the proposition is irrational.

Nor can the weakness be due to a lack of actual opportunity. As many documentaries were produced last year as in the highest production year during the war, and more still will be produced next year. Moreover, the field of sponsorship can be still more widely developed. There is

an increasing industrial potential and an ever-growing potential in international relationships. There has been a patent failure to analyse these newer opportunities and to take hold of them; partly because the implication of new economic and political relationships has not been sufficiently appreciated.

Again, the weakness cannot be due to the effect of Government sponsorship, when we are bound to say, in the same breath, that documentary's existence and present strength depend on Government sponsorship. What does emerge is that the partnership between sponsor and maker, on which the creative effort depends, is one involving large responsibilities on both sides, and that these responsibilities must be understood and systematically matured.

I have suggested that documentary may have been remiss in not keeping up with the advancing armies of Whitehall as they reached into ever-widening territories of Government interest and an ever more central position in regard to the reality of the time. We may have fallen into the old and fundamental æsthetic fallacy of believing that these immediate matters of State lie outside the higher considerations of art. There is no explanation of the tendency to escape into the tricks and fantasies of the medium—of substituting cleverness for illumination—except in the fact that the validity of the raw material is itself distrusted. In this one senses the maturing of an old and suicidal revolt so far as documentary is concerned.

I have myself at various times put down my version of documentary theory and policy as I understood it; and I have worked to it and to some extent made it work. It involves the firmest assertion that our place is where the creative operations of the State and the nation can be taken hold of, and this carries the conclusion that while our primary intention may lie in education and art, we have of necessity to be leaders, in our own fashion, in public thinking and public service, and specialists in one or other of the principal public concerns of the day. Yet, in spite of the great kindness shown to this theory, it has always been a harsh one to many ears, as it has been a hard one for many to follow for long. I say this as one who sometimes resents its implications as much as anyone and has, at times, as much nostalgia as anyone for the old literary approaches, but who must re-assert it as representing the one basic reality of the documentary idea.

DEVIATIONS

What has happened, I think, is that people have got increasingly out of touch with Whitehall, and therefore with the root of the matter, because they were not interested in economics, or in the sciences, or in the re-organisation of industry, or in the laborious affairs associated with Home Office reforms, health reforms, insurance reforms, labour-management reforms and such. That, I think, is really why the "best senior directors" have gone on their way, and no nonsense of "frustration" about it. They have gone because they have not been interested and because they have not seen forward to the end-result of an æsthetic relationship which involves new and difficult worlds of discourse.

The hard thing to say is that they have wanted the palm without the dust, but that is not quite right. Documentary has drawn every kind of person together and its intellectual disciplines have been, to say the least, light. Whatever may

have been said of my own theories, for example, they have never been as widely or deeply acted upon as some people supposed; and I have known this for a long time. It has simply happened that the documentary world got so rich in opportunity in the first flight of its theory that much has been permissible in deviation from it. It has been possible, in fact, to operate nicely on the æsthetic sidelines of documentary, without taking our public purpose emphasis too seriously. In other words, it has been possible and even profitable to work in documentary but still at heart serve the literary and æsthetic ends more commonly associated with the other arts.

This serving of different gods has never been important while a core of thinking and of interpretation existed which could explain the public service operation in æsthetic terms, and the æsthetic operation in public service terms, even if now and again it demanded a notable stroke of the imagination. The moment that core weakens and the service of interpretation is lost, as I think it has recently tended to be lost, the breakdown appears; and it is a logical breakdown. On the one hand, you have increasing boredom with the public service material and an increasing strength on the part of the mere bureaucrat. On the other hand, you have your documentary film-makers deviating into the illusory æsthetic of pictures about the theatre and the ballet. *In that regard the war period was an unmitigated disaster for documentary in Britain. It enabled the documentary people to avoid the real problem of their medium and escape the duty of founding an æsthetic practice on the actual materials of the public service. It enabled them to beg the whole question and escape into the normal—but, as I think, ever-weakening—paths of dramatic fashion.*

NOT FAR ENOUGH

No one need tell me now about "peaks of maturity". Some of the boys had their "peaks of maturity" a long time ago. It did not take the war for Flaherty, Cavalcanti and Harry Watt to realise the discomfort of a theory of æsthetic sponsorship which had to go the long, long way through a liaison service with departments, and an education of departments in the nature and excitements of the film as such. But if they, on their side, did not appreciate that the long view was right, it is equally true that others amongst us have failed consistently to make that long view a live view, by increasing the imaginative character of the sponsor relationship.

The conclusion, for practical purposes, must be that we cannot blame the Government people overmuch. They have come a long, long way. If they have not come far enough or fast enough to make the greater measure of art in documentary possible, the fault is substantially ours for not telling them how.

Who is to blame, it would be useless to discuss: it is obviously the leadership at both the film and Civil Service ends. A lot of people have got in there who didn't know what it was all about, or tended to forget, or got fed up with the damned anonymity of the business, or simply got fed-up period; and I don't wonder that the unfortunate characters at the directorial and technical end of the string have had a lot of uncomfortable slack to haul in. Some of us have been, and still are to-day, a pretty irresponsible crew, considering the thing we have in our hands. The group picture is plain horrible. Some are escaping into globe-trotting; some into committee-sitting;

some into parlour politics; some into the fallacy that beer is a fitting drink for creative workers; some into the cosy comfort of personal units, or into mere fractionism; some into the arms of music and the ballet and some, simply, into the bosom of their "warm admirers"; some, again, to the high-table blatherings of the B.B.C. on Sunday mornings; and some, like myself, to the cloud cuckoo barricades of the Avenue Kleber.

This is what Mrs. Holmes's argument finally amounts to. Some people are going from documentary to the studios. There is a sense of frustration among documentary film-makers in spite of the actual scale of the operation. There is a widespread view, right or wrong, that documentary pictures are not as exciting as they once were. I say to this that the failure lies in not organising the sponsor relationship in such a manner as to make all of these phenomena unnecessary.

The fact is, that the fact is as it was before. We should neither permit the gun flash of the war to blind us to its original nature, or the soporific nonsense of an old-fashioned middle-class æsthetic to divert us from the raw materials which our public service relationship uniquely and all-importantly provides. As the fact is, so the opportunity is; and it is there to burn. Putting it at its crudest level, there is a cool million and a half next year in Britain for documentary, if only we work it properly. But it does mean again the hard business of learning what, and organising how, on every level of production and distribution.

EHEU! FUGACES

I hate the prospect of so much labour as much as anyone, but we have, after all, got what we wanted; and we may not escape from it now, simply because it has become big and complex and cumbersome and difficult to handle. We may not escape it, and not only because we willed it ourselves but because we willed it once in a cause that is as great to-day as ever it was. As artists we may think of ourselves a little, and be sorry for ourselves, and even feel old at forty, and that the world owes us a living or something; but the thing we willed was originally, and is now, a service of illumination far beyond ourselves and more poignantly necessary to-day as the new peoples of the world roll over and look in the light of the morning for a sight of their destiny.

Mrs. Holmes says that we have got too big and unwieldy and sighs, as I suppose a girl must, for the days of our youth. But I don't see it that way. With so much dramatic change taking place in economic and social life everywhere, we ought in all conscience to become increasingly effective as a public instrument of record and illumination. But that effectiveness depends on our power to see and organize right up to the size of our opportunity.

Mrs. Holmes is nostalgic for something that, in the old days, was only incidental to the main effort. She talks of missing the old "nucleus of enthusiasm", the old "comradeship". In what I am afraid is the usual sentimental attitude to art and artists, she misses the fact that the vitality of documentary has always been associated with the positive building up of the connections and associations—intellectual, organisational and creative—which its theory demanded. There is no mystical secret about it. The same vitality must emerge as the old procedure is resumed or, to be more accurate, renewed, in the still larger terms which are now open to the medium.



Shadows on the Snow (Skuggor över Snow)

THE FILMS OF ARNE SUCKSDORFF

By

FORSYTH HARDY

OF ALL THE SHORT FILMS shown at last year's Film Festival in Edinburgh, none made a deeper impression than Arne Sucksdorff's Stockholm film, *Människor i Stad*. Where so many documentaries to-day seem uncertain and tired, here was one bright and confident as a June morning. In a genre where words have become an obsession, it showed how a film could dispense altogether with them and still make its story clear and compelling. It was essentially a *film*, not a lantern lecture nor a picture album: something first composed in the director's mind and then brilliantly rendered through the craft of the camera. It had movement and feeling and that sense of visual poetry which distinguishes the best films.

Människor i Stad was sent to the Edinburgh Festival under the title *Rhythm of the City*, but the proper translation is, of course, *People in the City*. This expresses its content more exactly and also suggests a contrast with the Ruttmann film which it little resembles. Sucksdorff's

aim is to render something of the atmosphere of Stockholm by resting his camera for a little, as it were, on a handful of people. He picks up a group of children here, an old fisherman there, watches a youth and a girl sheltering from the rain, catches the indulgent smile of the old verger in the church as a small boy's marbles roll over the floor, lingers while a fat man wipes his beaded brow in the mid-day heat. There is no deliberate search for significant incident, no determination to pursue a consciously social-critical line. There is still a sense of innocence, of wonderment, in Sucksdorff's camera eye. It is contemplative rather than analytical.

I have heard Sucksdorff's film discussed long and intently among documentary film-makers in this country. Some of them, I find, are stimulated by Sucksdorff's seemingly casual yet exceedingly effective approach, his capacity for basing a film, not on an argument, but on a mood; impressed, too, by his flair for drawing into his

camera the images he needs to hold and heighten that mood. I find others who are fascinated by the uncanny judgment of his camera movement or by his imaginative use of sound: the wail of the unseen ambulance through narrow streets, the street car's rumble which provides, cover for the gull's theft of the small boy's fish, the rattle of the spilt marbles in the silence of the church. I think we shall see before long in our films evidence of a study of Sucksdorff's methods.

People in the City is the seventh film of consequence by a director who has just turned thirty. At an age when most boys are waiting impatiently to possess a bicycle, he was already absorbed in photography. From photography to cinematography was a natural and inevitable step and, just before the war, he spent some time studying film-making in Berlin under Klein Rogge. When he returned to Stockholm at the outbreak of war, he became a cameraman in a small company producing sponsored films. His first films were very clearly the work of a man who could compose beautifully within the frame but had very little idea about how to make a film move. Always sensitive about reaction to his work, Sucksdorff sought and obtained the advice of critical friends.

The first film in which Sucksdorff began to find himself was *En Sommarsaga* (1941). This film is much more truly representative of Sucksdorff than *People in the City*.

Sucksdorff, indeed, has little in common with urban life. He can live in a town for only a very short period before an irresistible urge drives him into the country to renew himself. More than one of his films expresses the philosophy that life in cities is in some degrees unnatural and that a regular return to the country is essential to work the urban poison out of mind and body. *En Sommarsaga*, however, does not go as far as this. It is an exquisite little lyric about life in the forest. There is neither theme nor story. The inquisitive exploration of a little fox cub provides a certain continuity; but more important is the continuity of feeling which Sucksdorff maintains with his astonishingly intimate shots of flowers and insects and birds. To help to suggest the quality of the film, perhaps I might quote a few sentences of the translated commentary—not because the words are necessary while one is watching the film, but because they convey something of the mood:—

The winds freshens, the morning mists become more diffuse and disappear completely. It blows over the marshes where Linnea bells tremble on delicate stalks and the small Pyrola blossoms shine white in the dawn. There is one of them droops down towards the ground and there, on the other side of a little pine, some raise their faces in the sunlight. The wind blends their scent with that of the butterfly orchid. Dew hangs on the spider's web, gleaming like jewels, but the wind blows and times goes by. Soon the spider is sitting there and a new day with a new struggle for existence begins.



The West Wind (Vinden Från Väster)



People in the City (Människor i Stad)

Sucksdorff financed *En Sommarsaga* and, to an extent rare in films, it is entirely his own work. When he showed it to the Svensk Filmindustri, it was immediately acquired and he was invited to make other films for the company. The first was a film about reindeer, *Sarvötid*. This account of the autumn round-up of the reindeer in Lapland is finely photographed but it lacks the reflective feeling of the other Sucksdorff films. It was supervised by Gunnar Skoglund who wrote and spoke the somewhat strident commentary. The experience left Sucksdorff determined to be independent in his films, or nothing just as it demonstrated to the producing company how the best results could be obtained from the young director.

His next film was *Vinden från Väster (The West Wind)*. He found a sympathetic theme among the Lapps in the north of Sweden. When the warm west wind blows in the spring and melts the snow, the Lapps, who have come down to the shelter of the woodlands during the winter, feel a longing to return to the mountains: this is the starting-point of a film which seeks to convey the compelling urge felt by the Lapps to get away from the civilized valleys and renew themselves in the great open spaces. The most revealing shot in the film is of a wrinkled old Lapp with longing in his eyes gazing at the younger and fitter men setting out on the journey he is now too old to make. Sucksdorff tells his story through the eyes of a small boy who, from the window of his class-room, sees the migrants with their reindeer set off for the north and who, falling

asleep at his desk, follows them in his imagination. He visits the Valley of the Eagles and accepts the West Wind's challenge to climb to an eagle's nest to recover a reindeer bone so that he may show his fitness to guide the reindeer herd. There is more than an echo of Flaherty in this theme. Sucksdorff treats it with sensitiveness and sympathy: the visual impact is so strong that the commentary is hardly necessary.

A different aspect of Sucksdorff's feeling about nature found expression in *Trut (The Gull)*. When he went to the Baltic island of Stora Karlsö to make this film, he intended that in the story of the sea bird community there, the villains should be the sportsmen who are permitted to shoot each season a large number of guillemots; but when he had been on the island for a short time he found that the sea bird community harboured a greater villain, the gull. In his film, the gull becomes a monster, greedy, cruel and vicious. It is extraordinary how dramatic Sucksdorff makes the conflict between the savage gull and the peace-loving guillemot, seemingly paralysed when confronted with its enemy. The guillemots with their eggs, the menace of the gulls, and the guillemots' efforts to coax the young birds down to the sea before the wild August storms break over the cliffs—this forms one part of the theme. The cliffs, with their cross-sections from a bygone world, form the other as Sucksdorff attempts to look back over thousands of years to the Ice Age and beyond. This is a strange, complex film whose full meaning is yielded only



Dawn (Gryning)

after several viewings. At one time the film was thought to have a political meaning: the gull was Hitler and the guillemots the small powers and everybody else he could bully. The commentary remarks that the guillemots could band together and drive away the gull but this co-operative effort seems beyond them. Sucksdorff, however, does not accept this political parallel, although its currency at the time of the film's release is interesting.

In his next two films, *Gryning (Dawn)* and *Skuggor över Snön (Shadows on the Snow)*, Sucksdorff returned to the mood of *En Sommarsaga*, with this difference that the films embodied a note of conflict. In *Shadows on the Snow*, for example, he describes a bear hunt in a wood. The man with the gun follows the bear further and further from his home, and when at last his shot is fired, and he misses, he becomes conscious of the menace of the forest, with the trees throwing dark shadows across his path and eerie sounds issuing from their black depths. It is extraordinary how vivid Sucksdorff makes this struggle between the man and the unseen forces he senses around him. The director's sympathies are all with the natural world.

This sympathy is the motivating element in one of Sucksdorff's new films on which he has been working during the past year. It deals with certain events during a Christmas night. A small boy who has set snares during the day is sitting in church listening to the Christmas message; but he cannot help thinking about what is

happening to his snare. The camera moves outside where the snow lies deep and it is very cold. The hungry animals are watchful and wary. The hare, entangled in the snare, attracts an owl on the look-out for an easy meal; but it has also been seen by a fox and there is a fight. Back to the church, the homeward sleigh ride in the half-light, the boy's inspection of his snare; it is not difficult to see the ending of Sucksdorff's film, although we may be sure that its meaning runs more deeply than this summary suggests.

For most of the year, Sucksdorff lives in the country with the birds and the animals which provide him with the materials for his films. He has become friendly with them—tamed is not the right word—and they are quite undisturbed by the inquisitive probings of his camera. The animals include a couple of roe-deers, some foxes and a pine martin, while there are also ptarmigans, woodcock and owls. He also had a bear which was used in *Shadows on the Snow*. When, because of an accident, Sucksdorff had to shoot him through the head with a pistol, he said: "It was like blowing out a candle. I looked him in the eye and, without any fear or anger, the light of the eye went and he was dead".

Given his methods, it is not surprising to learn that Sucksdorff does not work from a full shooting script. He knows the effects he wants but he does not know in advance what the film will look like when completed. He studies his locations with great care and considers what he can

Continued on page 89.

AUSTRALIAN PRODUCTION

A reply to Catherine Duncan

by ERIC GOLDSCHMIDT

Far and few, far and few are the lands where the Jumbies live,

Their heads are green and their eyes are blue, and they went to sea in a sieve.

E. LEAR.

SO THAT was the tale of the queasy pioneers. How one started out with a small tobacco pipe mast and a beautiful pea-green veil—how one's friends were doubtful of the enterprise and how, in the end, one collared the fitting rewards: notable premières, eager questions from rural housewives and family circle films . . .

*And they bought an owl and a useful cart
And a pound of rice and a cranberry tart
And a hive of silvery bees.*

It's perfectly true that, between the wars, Australia faced the see-saw of Hollywood pastiche and hick-town comedies. It's perfectly true that Grierson and the Film Board whipped some self-raising flour into the soggy out-back film industry, that Watt and Parer and Ivens were so many lucky charms in the bush Christmas pudding. Whether Cinesound and Columbia are happy arrivals on the Australian scene, whether the striving towards documentary got an enthusiastic reception—I don't think it's as easy as all that. I'm suggesting that Miss Duncan's summary should be adjusted a little. Her summary is misleading in three points concerning Australian films.

(i) COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION exists on a greater scale than Miss Duncan suggests. It's true that there are only two studios available: one of them was re-equipped by Ealing and the other is used for *all* other work (government films, private ventures and anything in between). These two studios are owned by a company controlling the major chain of cinemas; both the major and the minor chain are strongly tied up with the J. Arthur Rank organization. Thus we arrive at Miss Duncan's conclusion: Australia's main contribution lies in the production of short films. But only because (a) it's impossible to recoup expenses for a feature in Australasia; (b) if it weren't, any possible independent producer would have to come to terms with the J. Arthur Rank organization, one way or another.

(ii) DOCUMENTARIES.—Though government productions were the daddy of it all, people have made documentaries A-nte G-rierson as well as P-ost G-rierson. In 1938 A.G. a man called Frank Hurley distinguished himself by producing a whacking history of the State of New South Wales. There were four reels to gather up all the hundred years during which the State had flourished. After the war all sorts of private societies, sporting groups and educational bodies made films. As an instance, the case of a Melbourne clergyman should be mentioned. Disgusted by public apathy over slums, this clergyman forked up a camera and gave a public showing of his findings. The city council

got to hear about this and took notice accordingly. I'll bet my bible against the Jumbies' riches that the clergyman concerned hadn't heard of Grierson.

"Government films were made mainly for overseas distribution and ignore the more serious aspects of Australian living . . ." "The public discovered that documentaries could be exciting as well as informative", says Miss Duncan. Even if it were so, I find a contradiction in these two statements. But Government films were *not* made for overseas distribution. They were made, as Grierson so rightly stressed, "to make citizenship a positive factor in democracy". Films on election procedures, Tasmanian area schools and standardization of railway gauges were made to link the widely-spaced sections of Australia's population. As Chips Rafferty said: "It's as far from Wyndham to Brisbane as it is from London to Moscow". By recording regional peculiarities, the Film Board did much the same as Australia's most popular newspaper column, which is called "The March to Nationhood."

Whether Government films ignore the more serious aspects I wouldn't know. What would they be, those serious ones, anyway? The way highbrows moan about the poor acoustics of the Brisbane Town Hall? The way a drought reduces thousands to ruin and frustration? The way Toohey's lager has gone off lately, and the way S.P. bookies deplorably ignore the law of the land? Are those the serious aspects? If so, the Film Board didn't worry about them. But if it's serious that a river is being dammed, that Canberra hopes to encapsule democracy and civic planning, that every school kid in the country gets its lesson by post—if that's serious then the Government did bother about it.

And to round this off with a shameless *tu quoque*: would Miss Duncan say that her own production of *Native Earth* was made for export and lacked in seriousness?

(iii) GENERALIZATIONS.—The main issues in Australian film production are the supply of technical skill and capital. The first has been tackled by the government in so far as it could be done. But, trained technicians don't grow on gum trees, and Ealing—the only feature producer to do so—has instituted a long-range training scheme. Shell Film Unit is about to do the same. But since few films are made in Australia, actors and technicians will have to go overseas. And overseas they either strike Union trouble or they become successful—in which case they kiss their Australian youth good-bye. It's more or less the same dilemma with capital: investments cannot come forth unless there's an overseas market. An overseas market is securely tied up. Therefore investments come from overseas. Therefore a purely Australian film production depends on the enlightened state of the British or American film industry. Even if it should all get fixed up, there's a long time lag before the average Australian is as enthusiastic about documentaries as Miss Duncan wishes him to be. At the moment, perhaps 500 Australians have heard about Grierson, perhaps 1,000 care about such problems.

The upshot of it all is that Miss Duncan's information about pioneering films in Australia is sound enough. Her description of present-day developments seems a bit lopsided. But probably the best chance for Australian films is if people like Miss Duncan will continue to work for them. For, I'd like to mention that she is one of Australia's foremost playwrights and the most intelligent actress we have.



El Tanbor de Tacuari

THE ARGENTINE CINEMA

By

MATTHEW NORGATE

"WE HAVE NO TRADITIONS AND NO CULTURE". So said one of the most intelligent Argentinos I met, and proceeded to give himself the lie by his own highly cultured conversation as we sat in his Buenos Aires flat, while our drinks were mixed and brought to us according to local tradition—alike as to hospitality and the channel of service—by his film-star wife.

But one saw what he meant. For Argentina is a very new country, and one, with its neighbour Uruguay, far less Latin-American and far more European than any other South American state. The population is almost exclusively white. According to official figures, 76 per cent. are Argentine citizens of European origin, 21.5 per cent. foreigners (almost all Europeans), and 2.5 per cent. of mixed European and native Indian blood. Only 200 years

ago the territory—five times the size of France—which was to become the Argentine Republic was almost uninhabited, and those who lived there were nearly all the descendants of the original Spanish colonists. The present population of some 16 millions is largely composed of people whose antecedents immigrated from Europe, predominantly from Italy and Spain, only a few generations ago. The Argentine is therefore characterised by what one may call a neoterism complex, and this accounts for much in his social, political and intellectual life, including an intensely nationalistic outlook, not only in politics but in art. And, in the case of the cinema, since he has no purely Argentine æsthetic traditions to fall back upon, he looks a good deal to Europe for subject matter and cultural tenets, though technically Hollywood is as frequent a guide. Yet he is encouraged by

his Government to make pictures that will satisfy the Argentinos first. Consequently the Argentine cinema is to some extent a self-contradictory hybrid.

But it is a young industry. Its first real success was gained in 1915 with *Nobleza gaucha*, the exhibition of which originally attracted the attention of big business. But it did so to little purpose until 1930, when the first Argentine talking film, *Muñequitas Porteñas* ("Little Dolls of Buenos Aires"), again kindled the interest of the industrialists, who from then onwards poured money into the business. Many Argentinos in the rural areas were then (as indeed many still are) illiterate, and the coming of sound provided obvious opportunities for the recruitment of a new public. But between 1930 and 1935 the public preferred the sound films of Europe and North America, no doubt because Argentine producers (albeit like those of other countries) underrated the public intelligence, and confined themselves to subjects which are sufficiently indicated by such titles as *Dancing* (sic), *Tango* and *Los Muchachos de antes no usaban gomina* ("The Boys of the Old Days Didn't Use Brilliantine"). It was not until 1937 that the first authentically Argentine film of any pretensions was made, and in this film, *Viento Norte*, a small part was played by Delia Garcés, now deservedly one of Argentina's highest-paid stars. This was followed by several other films by the same director,

Mario Soffici, whose work attained its zenith in 1945 with *La cabalgata del circo* ("Circus Cavalcade"), which would be well worth while showing in London to-day. At least it is genuine Argentine stuff, which so many of its predecessors and successors are not. But before that another milestone had been reached in *La guerra gaucha* ("The Gaucho War"), a film of epic proportions made by Artistas Argentinos Asociados, a firm founded by a group of actors who struggled to be independent of big business.

Nowadays, however, big business has the upper hand, and moneymaking is the goal. Last March Argentina's first film festival—also the first, incidentally, on the American continent—was held at Mar del Plata, a seaside resort a couple of hundred miles from Buenos Aires. Characteristically, the official sponsors of the festival saw to it that all the films shown were Argentine, and they selected them from the newest, which were not necessarily the best. And, also characteristically, the object of the festival turned out to be—or so it seemed to the British delegate—less to boost Argentine films (which in the circumstances would have been understandable) than to lay emphasis upon the general progress of the Republic. In other words it was commerce that counted first. Lest I seem ungrateful for much lavish hospitality, let me add that the festival was also the most efficiently organised of all that I have attended, and that as



Rosa de América



La Copla de la Dolores

far as the four delegates from Europe were concerned political propaganda, except in the numerous post-prandial speeches, was discreetly kept in the background. The entertainment offered us was not confined to film-going and wining and dining. The only purely political occasion was a mass interview with President Perón, at which I caught not a single reference to the cinema; but we were shown the sights and we were taken on sundry visits to film studios. These latter proved not a little instructive, and I brought away two main impressions. One was that, although Argentine films are technically below the standards of those of the United States and the main centres of European production—most notably, they tend to drag—their directors and technicians waste far less time in shooting than is the case, at any rate, in Britain. The other was that their equipment is oddly primitive. At two major studios, for instance, the sound-boom in use was a sort of bamboo fishing-rod manipulated by hand and with a static microphone at the end of it.

A rough analysis of the relative popularity of British films shown in Argentina may be of interest. When I was there everyone was still raving about *A Matter of Life and*

Death, and *Blithe Spirit* had also had a big success. I am, however, in a position to draw comparisons for films shown during 1946 and 1947 only.

Top of the poll for 1946 was *The Seventh Veil*, with *Madonna of the Seven Moons* not far behind. Top for 1947 was *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, which did only about half as well as the other two, despite a stronger publicity campaign. Generally speaking, the figures for 1946 were a good deal higher than those for 1947, though on the other hand about twice as many British films were shown in the latter year.

In 1947 the runners-up to *Cæsar and Cleopatra* and *Odd Man Out* were *Fanny By Gaslight*, whose subject was nearer home for Argentinos whose memory goes back to pre-Perón days, though nowadays Buenos Aires is probably one of the cleanest capital cities in the world. Next (in descending order of popularity) came *Dead of Night*, *They Were Sisters*, *The Rake's Progress* and *Brief Encounter*, the last of which, as in most other countries, had a great *success d'estime*. Bottom of the poll were *Latin Quarter*, *Murder in Reverse* and *Night Boat to Dublin*, the three of which together grossed less than the least popular film for 1946.



INTRODUCTION

I had not the honour of knowing the great inventor who has just died when I received from him in August, 1946, a manuscript consisting of some dozen pages entitled, "Observations suggested to Louis Lumière by reading Georges Sadoul's book entitled: 'L'Invention du Cinema'". In this monograph he had taken the trouble to rectify certain errors in the first volume of my "Histoire générale du Cinema", completing my data on a number of points.

M. Louis Lumière received me a few weeks later at Bandol. In the course of this long interview—and of those which followed—he furnished me with a large body of information concerning his Cinematograph, and this enabled me to prepare a very much augmented and corrected edition of "L'Invention du Cinema", which edition will appear in a few weeks' time.

In January last, M. Louis Lumière, whose health had been steadily declining since 1946, was kind enough to allow me to interview him for the French television service.

This interview was recorded and filmed by M. Bocquel. A lengthy afternoon's work was required. M. Louis Lumière, who at that time scarcely left his bed, had to make a considerable physical effort in reading, at the cost of great exertion, the text which he held before his almost sightless eyes. However, under the projectors and in front of the microphone he maintained his usual smiling affability. This was the last time he was confronted by the apparatus on which he had bestowed the name "Cinema".

Last March, this interview was televised; it opened the series of remarkable broadcasts which Georges Charensol

LUMIÈRE—

THE LAST

INTERVIEW

Here, in this hitherto unpublished interview given last January to Georges Sadoul, the late Louis Lumière discloses many of the secrets of his early days, including the fact that the first successful motion picture was made two years earlier than hitherto realised.

devoted to the history of the cinema, with the collaboration of Pierre Brive. It is thanks to their initiative that the cinema is able to retain among its archives a final picture—and an extremely touching one—of Louis Lumière.

The text of this last interview, which is here published for the first time, is as follows :

THE INTERVIEW

Sadoul: M. Louis Lumière, what were the circumstances in which you began to be interested in animated photographs?

Louis Lumière: It was during the summer of 1894 that my brother Auguste and I commenced our first work. At that period, the research of Marey, Edison and Démeny had caused those inventors to arrive at certain results, but no projection of film on a screen had yet been accomplished.

The main problem to be solved was that of finding a system of driving the strip of film pictures. My brother Auguste had thought of using for the purpose an indented cylinder, similar to that proposed by Léon Bouilly in another apparatus. But such a system was clumsy. It couldn't work and it never did.

Sadoul: Did M. Auguste Lumière then put forward other systems?

Louis Lumière: No, my brother ceased being interested in the technical side of the cinematograph as soon as I had found the right driving device. If the cinematograph patent was taken out in our joint name, this was because we always signed jointly the work reported on and the patents we filed, whether or not both of us took part in the work. *I was actually the sole author of the cinematograph*, just as he on his side was the creator of other inventions that were always patented in both our names.

Sadoul: What was the driving system you proposed?

Louis Lumière: I was rather indisposed and had to remain in bed. One night when I was unable to sleep, the

solution came clearly to my mind. It consisted of adapting to the camera the mechanism known by the name of "presser foot" in the drive device of sewing machines, which device I first carried out with the aid of a circular eccentric; this I soon replaced by the same part but triangular in shape, which is known in different applications by the name of Hornblower's eccentric.

Sadoul: You then constructed an experimental apparatus on the principles you had just discovered?

Louis Lumière: M. Moisson, chief mechanic at our works, assembled the first apparatus in accordance with the sketches which I handed him as the invention took shape. As it was then impossible to obtain transparent celluloid films in France, I conducted my initial tests with strips of photographic paper manufactured in our works. I cut them and perforated them myself. The first results were excellent, as you may have seen.

Sadoul: As a matter of fact I have held in my hands with considerable emotion that long strip of paper which you presented to the "Musée de la Cinémathèque Française". The pictures are of perfect clarity.

Louis Lumière: Those strips were purely experimental. The negatives on paper could not be cast on the screen owing to their excessive opacity. I nevertheless succeeded in animating them in the laboratory by looking at them with the transparency effect produced by a strong arc lamp. The results were excellent.

Sadoul: Did you have to wait long before using celluloid films similar to those employed by the modern cinema?

Louis Lumière: I would have used celluloid strips at once had I been able to obtain in France a flexible, transparent celluloid which gave me satisfaction. However, no French or British firm was then making any. I had to send one of our departmental managers to the United States, who purchased celluloid in non-sensitised sheets from the New York Celluloid Company, and brought them back to us at Lyon. We cut them and perforated them with the aid of an apparatus whose feed device was based on that of the sewing machine, which apparatus was perfected by M. Moisson.

Sadoul: What was the date when you were able to make your first film on celluloid?

Louis Lumière: It was at the end of the summer of 1894 that I was able to make my first film, "Workers leaving the Lumière Factory". As you may have noticed, the men are wearing straw hats and the women summer dresses. Moreover, I needed strong sunlight to be able to make such scenes, for my lens was not very powerful, and I should not have been able to take such a view in winter or at the end of autumn. The film was shown in public for the first time at Paris, rue de Bennes, before the "Société d'Encouragement pour l'Industrie Nationale". This was on 22nd March, 1895. This showing ended a lecture which I had been asked to give by the illustrious physicist, Mascart of the Institute, then President of the Society. I also showed on the screen the formation of a photographic image in course of development; this involved certain difficulties which I will not go into here.

Sadoul: Was your apparatus already called the Cinematograph?

Louis Lumière: I do not think we had already baptised it. Our first patent, taken out on 13th February, 1895, did not adopt any particular name. In that patent we merely referred to "an apparatus for obtaining and showing chronophotographic prints". It was not until several weeks

weeks afterwards that we selected the name of Cinematograph.

However, my father, Antoine Lumière, thought the word Cinematograph was impossible. He was persuaded to adopt for our apparatus the name of DOMITOR by his friend Lechère, the representative of the Moët and Chandon champagnes.

Sadoul: What was the meaning of that word?

Louis Lumière: I don't exactly know; it was a portmanteau word devised by Lechère. It was probably derived from the verb "to dominate"—dominator—domitor. This name was never accepted by my brother or by myself, and we have never used it.

Sadoul: Did the perfection of your cinematograph involve you in technical problems that were difficult to solve?

Louis Lumière: One of the points which received my attention was that of the resistance of the films. Celluloid films were then, to us, a new product of whose qualities or properties we were ignorant. I therefore, embarked on methodical experiments by piercing the strips with needles of different diameters, to which I suspended increasing weights. I thus arrived at important conclusions, for instance that the hole might, without inconvenience, be larger than the pin passing through it and have equally as good resistance as if the hole and pin were the same size.

Sadoul: Did your factory undertake the industrial manufacture of your cinematograph?

Louis Lumière: No, and what is more we did not make any apparatus, for we were not equipped to carry out such manufacture. After the lecture which I gave at Paris at the beginning of 1895, the engineer Jules Carpentier, who became one of my best friends and remained such until his death, asked if he might manufacture our apparatus in his workshops which had just placed an excellent camera on the market. I accepted this suggestion but it was not until the beginning of 1896 that Carpentier was able to supply us with the first ten machines. Up to then I had to be content with the apparatus we had built at Lyon.

Sadoul: Since in 1895, you only had a single apparatus which served both for taking pictures and for showing them, during that year you were the sole operator taking pictures for your cinematograph?

Louis Lumière: That is correct. All the films which were shown in 1895, either at the Photographic Congress of Lyon in June, for the Revue Générale des Sciences at Paris in July or in Paris, in the basement of the Grand-Café, from 28th December, 1895, onwards, were films in which I had been the operator. There was a single exception, "Les Brûleuses d'Herbes" was taken by my brother Auguste who was on holiday at our estate in La Ciotat. I should add that not only did I make these films, but the first strips shown at the Grand-Café were developed by me in enamelled iron slop-buckets containing the developer, then the washing water and the fixative. The relevant positives were similarly printed, and I used as source of light a white wall with the sun shining on it.

Sadoul: Can you, M. Lumière, tell us about the "Partie d'Ecarté"?

Louis Lumière: The partners are: my father Antoine Lumière, who lights a cigar. Opposite him his friend the conjurer Trewey who is dealing the cards. Trewey was, moreover, the organiser in London of showings of our cinematograph, and he is to be seen in several of the films, "Assiettes tournantes" for instance. The third player, who is pouring out some beer, is my father-in-law, the brewer

Winckler of Lyon. The servant, finally, was a man attached to the house. He was born at Confaron—a pure-blooded southern Frenchman, full of gaiety and wit, who kept us amused with his repartees and jokes.

"L'Arrivée du Train en Gare", which I took at the station of La Ciotat in 1895, shows on the platform a little girl who is skipping along, one hand held by her mother and the other by her nurse. This child is my eldest daughter, afterwards Mrs. Trarieux, and she is now four times a grandmother. My mother, Mrs. Antoine Lumière, can be identified by her Scotch cape.

Sadoul: What can you tell us about the famous "Arroseur Arrosé"?

Louis Lumière: Although my recollections are not very accurate, I think I may say that the idea of the scenario was suggested to me by a farce by my younger brother Edouard, whom we unhappily lost while an airman during the 1914-1918 war. He was then too young to play the part of the urchin who treads on the garden hose. I replaced him by a young apprentice from the carpenter's workshop of the factory, Duval, who died after performing his duties as chief packer of the works for almost forty-two years. As regards the waterer, the part was played by our gardener M. Clerc, who is still alive after being employed at the works for forty years. He retired and is now living near Valence.

Sadoul: How many films did you make in 1895?

Louis Lumière: I must have made nearly fifty. My memory is not very reliable with regard to the number of these subjects. These films were all 17 metres long and it took about a minute to show them. This length of 17 metres may seem odd, but it was merely governed by the capacity of the spool-boxes holding the negative film when the pictures were taken.

Sadoul: Can you mention a few titles of films which you made in 1895?

Louis Lumière: We produced a few comic films in which relations, friends, employees, etc., took part, such as "Chez le Photographe", a little farce in which the actors were my brother Auguste and the photographer Maurice, who was soon to become the concessionnaire of our cinematograph at the Grand-Café. Then there was "Charcuterie Americaine" in which we showed a sausage machine; a pig was put in at one end and the sausages came out at the other, and vice versa. My brother and I had great fun making this fictitious machine on our estate at La Ciotat, and we inscribed on the instrument "Crack, pork butcher, Marseilles".

I should also mention the "Landing of Members of the Congress" at Neuville-sur-Saône, which was in a way the first news film, for I took it on the occasion of the Photographic Congress in June, 1895, and showed it next day before the members of the congress.

Sadoul: Have you made any films since 1895?

Louis Lumière: Very few. I left this to the operators whom I had trained: Promio, Mesguich, Doublier, Perrigot and others. In a few years they had entered on our catalogues over twelve hundred films made in all parts of the world.

Sadoul: How long is it since you have ceased to be interested in the cinematograph?

Louis Lumière: My last work dates back to 1935, at which time I perfected a stereoscopic cinema which was shown, in particular, at Paris, Lyon, Marseilles and Nice. However, my work has been in the direction of scientific

research. I have never engaged in what is termed "production". I do not think I would fit into a modern studio. Moreover, I have been incapacitated for some time and can scarcely leave Bandol.

FILM APPRECIATION

To the Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

DEAR SIR.—No discussion on Film Appreciation seems to get very far at the moment without someone saying, "But we must not tell them what they ought to like".

The phrase is presumably aimed at those who uncritically propound, or adopt, ready-made dogmas, so let us treat this dogma—that one mustn't tell them what they ought to like—to the critical analysis which it invites.

Three principal considerations have perhaps contributed to its popularity.

In the first place educational theory lays increasing stress on the value of teaching people to think for themselves in contrast to supplying them with ready-made information.

In the second place we have become acutely conscious of the value of individual freedom of thought since totalitarian doctrines have brought it into jeopardy.

And in the third place we have a feeling that good taste in films—and art generally—is an effect rather than a cause of good general education, so that to seek to educate people by imposing on them better æsthetic taste is rather like seeking to alter the time of day by pushing round the hands of a watch.

Excellent though these arguments are I think that there is something to be said on the other side and I seek the hospitality of your columns for saying it.

In the first place, on the question of teaching people to make their own decisions by offering guiding principles instead of ready-made conclusions—this is reasonably possible in the field of the more exact sciences, but beset with snares in the field of æsthetics, owing to the fact that this is among the least developed branches of psychology.

In the second place, on the question of free individual development—the logical conclusion of this line of argument is surely that it is better to have bad taste freely developed from within than good taste imposed from without. If anyone really cherishes this nihilistic belief it is difficult to see why he should feel interest in any proposal whatsoever for improving taste.

In the third place, on the question of good taste being a result of certain desirable states of mind rather than a cause of them, may it not be true that it works in both directions? Surely in favourable circumstances people may adopt ready-made admiration for good works of art from mentors whose opinions they respect, and thereafter enjoy a sort of infiltration of culture into their ideas which does them more good than harm?

Let us by all means bear in mind the dangers inseparable from any sort of dogmatism, but let us not fly to the opposite extreme and deny to teachers the harmless necessary technique of saying, "What I like about this film is", and explaining their own preferences with the obvious inference that they hope their students will share them.

H. D. WALEY.



Le Miserie de Signor Travet

Pan-Lux

The Italians—III

Italy, film

MARIO SOLDATI

By

VERNON JARRATT

THE HALLOWED PATH to the director's canvas chair is by now a fairly well-beaten track. The most well-known landmark on that track is, of course, the job as clapper boy—almost as essential for a successful director's past as the barefoot selling of newspapers for an American millionaire's; though script-writer, cutter, and cameraman are fairly well as established as runners-up for the post of landmark. Soldati arrived by a slightly less orthodox route: a professorship in the history of art, and a job (which he didn't get) as advertising manager for a typewriter firm.

Born in 1903, he passed the first twenty-six years of his life as a student, ending as a doctor of Literature at Turin University. In 1929 he went to Columbia University as a teacher and student combined—to teach the history of

art to the northern barbarians, and to study their language. How far he succeeded in the former I don't know, but he certainly acquired a grasp of the English language which makes it, in his hands, a very vigorous if slightly uncertain weapon which he wields with enormous gusto and occasionally devastating effect.

As well as acquiring his knowledge of the English language he also acquired a wife, an American one, and found, like other men who before him have given hostages to fortune, that the carefree bohemian life of a student for whom liberty was more important than a regular income, would have to give place to something a little more humdrum.

He was rather undecided between two possible jobs.



Daniele Cortis

Universalis

One was that of advertising manager for Olivetti, the typewriter firm; the other was to join Cines, now out of existence but then the oldest Italian producing house. Don't ask me what his qualifications were for either: when he was in America he didn't even like films. His preference was for the typewriters, but something went awry, so he took the next best thing and joined Cines as second assistant to Camerini—not so far removed from the classical clapper boy after all. Camerini, incidentally, is still directing, his latest film being a very workmanlike version of Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*, finished in the autumn of 1947.

Soldati continued for two years as Camerini's assistant, a job which, he says, he tackled just as he would have tackled that of a bank clerk or a shop assistant. The job had for him no glamour, no excitement, no creative interest; it was just a way of earning a living, one that had no more connection with the world of his own ideas than the average routine job in an urban civilisation. However, he began to write scripts, though more I think as a source of extra income than anything else, and then very suddenly found that he had acquired the skill, just as one suddenly finds that one can swim or ski or ride a bicycle. It had come, almost without his knowing it.

It was only in 1939, eight years after he had become Camerini's assistant, that Soldati directed his first film. But during these years there had been at least one major interval, the two years from 1934 to 1936, when he retired to Lake D'Orta and lived very well and happily on 240 lire a month. Nowadays 240 lire would buy you half a pound of butter, or a plate and a half of spaghetti in a not very smart restaurant.

During these years he wrote "America Prima Amore", a volume of autobiography; a novel called "La Verita sul Caso Motta"; and a volume of sketches and short stories called "L'Amico Gesuito". Soldati is, indeed, one of the few directors who could earn both a living and a respected position as a writer unconnected with the screen—not, perhaps, an unmixed advantage for a director whose talents, it seems to me, should be almost purely visual, his writing as incidental as that of most painters.

But, finally, he did become a director; with some difficulty, for he found that eight years was rather too long an apprenticeship. People had got used to his being only an assistant, and were inclined to think that if he were any good he would have become a director before. But his first picture, which was called *Dora Nelson* and was based on a

comedy by Verneuil, was successful both commercially and artistically. His second was, he says, bad. I haven't seen it myself, nor have I been able to find anyone who has, so we must accept his own verdict and leave it in the decent obscurity whence I have been able to extract not even its name.

But with his third film he really found himself. He also found Alida Valli, who had in it her first starring role. The film was *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, from the well-known novel by Fogazzaro. The story is of the Risorgimento and, since it was made in 1940 when the Axis was in full flower, led to some amusing and typical stupidities on the part of the censorship, who could hardly dare to criticise or meddle with such an accepted near-classic, and were equally afraid of upsetting their dominant German partners. Eventually they arrived at the sort of ridiculous compromise at which censorships always do seem to arrive: the Austrians could remain Austrian, could wear the Austrian uniforms of the period, and even speak Austrian amongst themselves; but the words German, Germany, Austria, Austrian must never be used. So honour was saved, and the picture made.

Soldati has frequently been accused of being a "literary" director, partly in the sense of having an overwhelming predilection for basing his pictures on well-known books, partly in his actual style of direction. Soldati himself does not think this criticism just. Or rather, accepting as he must that his best works have all been based on well-known books, he attributes this to another cause.

"You must remember", he says, "that the pictures with which I established myself were all made under Fascism. No honest man, no sincere artist, could make under Fascism a picture dealing with modern subjects, because he could do that only if he were prepared to glorify the regime, or to make something quite trivial. Anyone who was both honest and serious was practically forced to make a historical picture. I'd always sooner base such a picture on a contemporary book than on a modern script. How can we know more about the real feeling of a period than the people who actually lived then?"

Having to some extent typed himself as a director of historical subjects based on well-known books Soldati found it as difficult to break away from his type-casting as most



Daniele Cortis

Universalvia

people in the cinema world, the film mind being one into which it is very difficult to plant an idea and, once planted, practically impossible to extricate it. I think that there is, however, this much truth in the accusation of his literariness—that, being himself an author, having himself suffered the pangs of bringing a book to birth, he finds it difficult to be as ruthless in his treatment as he should be. He may be a better author than David Lean, but I do not think that he could have made so good a job of the script of *Great Expectations*. He's rather like the man who is too kind-hearted to be a good surgeon.

Piccolo Mondo Antico was made in 1940. In 1942 he made *Malombra*, also from a Fogazzaro novel; in 1944-1945 *Le Miserie de Signor Travet*, from the novel which Vittorio Bersezio wrote in 1862; in 1945-1946 *Eugenia Grandet*, based, of course, on Balzac's famous study of miserliness; and in 1946-1947 *Daniele Cortis*, again from a book by Fogazzaro. It might, perhaps, be interesting to examine the last three in a little more detail.

"Travet" is a Piedmontese dialect word for a small joist, and is used as slang for the lowly government employee who is one of the many supports of the bureaucratic machine—the meek downtrodden little clerk, with an overbearing wife, unsympathetic colleagues, and a bullying boss; a theme which, in the cinema, seems to me to run *Cinderella* a close second. But Soldati gave it life, not only by the very human understanding with which he built his characters up into the round instead of leaving them flat and decorated, as is so often the fate of characters in this sort of film, but also by the extraordinarily convincing way in which he places his characters right in the Turin of the sixties of the last century. His ability to do this is, indeed, one of his great virtues as a director.

Travet, his wife, and the bullying Commendatore who is Travet's chief, played by Carlo Campanini, Vera Carmi, and Gino Cervi, are not the usual crepe-haired charade players in front of unconvincing sets. You feel that they really live, move, and have their being in that Turin of eight decades ago when it was still the seat of Government.

I was curious about Soldati's use of exteriors, as they seemed so convincingly Turinese and yet had, I knew, been shot while Turin was still occupied by the Germans. "They were all shot in Rome", said Soldati, "but I chose buildings that had been designed by Piedmontese architects and built by Piedmontese workmen; the Ministry of Finance, for example, designed by Raffaele Canevari in 1865, and built between 1870 and 1877, was used for all the office scenes". For the superb interior of the Commendatore's apartment Soldati had a real find. He discovered, in an old-fashioned and rather neglected quarter of Rome, an apartment occupied by two old maiden ladies; the place had been furnished by their parents, who were Piedmontese, and not a thing had been changed for over sixty years; every picture, every rug, every cushion, every smallest ornament was exactly as it had been then. I think those two little incidents give you a useful insight into one of the major aspects of Soldati's work.

Eugenia Grandet was Alida Valli's last picture before departing to work for Selznick in America; presumably *The Paradine Case* will have shown, by the time this article appears, what he has done with her. The picture was not very well received in Italy—some of the scenes, particularly the death scene of Grandet pere, were actually hissed at the 1946 Venice Festival—but I do not think that this is any reflection on Soldati's work as a director. The "hero" and

"heroine" are unsympathetic by present-day standards; the hero is a cad, and the heroine is a poor fish who lets herself be treated badly, and doesn't even get her man in the end. And one of the basic motives of the whole film, miserliness, is an emotion that is hardly understood nowadays.

Soldati's respect—that fatal defect—for Balzac was too great to permit the sort of rough handling that might have made the picture even better and would certainly have made it more popular. But many things stand out in one's recollection of the picture; the sombre convincingness of the great rambling Grandet house, for one thing. I saw this set while the film was being shot, and it was typical of Soldati's methods of work that it was built as a complete house; room led into room, all of them with four walls and a ceiling; all the doors opened and shut; the windows were real windows; the passage which, in the film, leads into the great kitchen, did in fact lead into the great kitchen and not into the plasterers' shop. And I think that this was, at least in part, responsible for the sense of almost overpowering oppression with which the spectacle of life in the Grandet household filled one. Nor did this method lead to any real difficulties during the shooting, for although the house was built as a whole the walls were in sections and detachable, so that a little more elbow room for camera or microphone boom or lights could always be found when it was needed.

(I think a little anecdote is *à propos* here. For one film, I forget which, Soldati needed for a key scene an apartment from the windows of which you could see the Trevi fountain. Instead of a model or a back-projection he leased an apartment actually looking out on the Trevi; then he found there wasn't room for his camera, so he knocked down a party wall, shot his scene, and put the party wall back. Extravagant? No, says Soldati; it actually cost less than doing it in the studio—and you got a feeling of reality you'd never have got otherwise.)

Daniele Cortis, Soldati's picture to date, was one of the first made by the big new Italian company of Universal—no connection with the American Universal. This, too, is from a Fogazzaro novel, and again Soldati worked with Gino Cervi, who is one of the best young character actors in Italy, as one of the principals. The other was our own Sarah Churchill, chosen, I think, because it was thought that her rather cold style of beauty, at least to Italian eyes, would suit the part of the woman who preferred her duty towards a hated and despised husband to the claims of romantic love. The picture, though not outstanding, was sound and workmanlike and had many moments of real beauty, while Soldati's handling of the stormy crowd scenes, shot in the actual Camera dei Deputati in Rome, was very good indeed.

Soldati has one more picture to make in Italy before he follows his discovery Alida Valli to the Selznick fold in America. This will be made for Lux, whose *To Live In Peace* was the second big post-war Italian success in Great Britain. He is determined in this film to break away from the literary label which is so firmly hung round his neck, and to film an original story, which will probably be one of four that he has written himself. If, to his feeling for a faithfulness to reality that is no less real for being less harsh than that of *Open City* or *Sciusciai*, if to this he can add a story more suitable to the medium of the screen than to a book, then the results should be worth waiting for.

Report on

GERMANY

The emergence of a new film industry described

by

EGON LARSEN



Film Ohne Titel

YOU CAN STILL go to the pictures in Berlin for the incredibly low price of one mark, in one of the little flea-pits which have provided the Berliners with screen entertainment for the last fifty years. They have survived the bombing and street-fighting better than the few large West End cinema palaces, which are mostly in ruins; so are a large proportion of cinemas in the Provinces.

Out of that mark only a few *groschen* are returned to the producers, just enough to buy a couple of iron nails on the black market. Everything is still desperately scarce, from canvas and paint to camera parts and film cement. Raw film is a major problem, especially in the Western Zones. Only recently the Americans arranged for some standard stock imports from the U.S. to be coated in Germany; but emulsions differ so widely that a costly and complex scene for a Russian-licensed film had to be re-shot this summer, at a cost of 70,000 marks, because of faulty emulsion. Sub-standard stock is almost unobtainable.

In 1932-33, the last pre-Nazi year, Germany produced 140 feature films, supplying all Central and Northern Europe with screen fare. In 1946, production was down to four features. Apart from a few selected films, there are no sales to foreign countries yet. But the worst thing is that even in Germany itself a German film cannot be shown nationally: Russian-licensed pictures are excluded from the Western Zones, British and U.S.-licensed ones from the East, except in individual cases in which an exchange of films has been arranged; and with inter-Allied relations

being what they are, this is a rare event. Only the Berliners can see films from either side of the Iron Curtain.

FILMS WITH A MESSAGE

These restrictions and difficulties have not succeeded in choking the German film industry out of existence. On the contrary, production is going on at full speed, and no less than 40 feature films are being made in 1948-49. Russians, Americans and British alike (the French seem to have different opinions), and most of the German film-workers themselves, realize that the film can be a powerful factor in shaping a new Germany. It can help, encourage, advise, warn; it can explain the past and show the way to a better future; it can relieve and give a deeper meaning to the bitter present. How have the German film-makers set about the task to deliver these messages?

The first, surprising impression after seeing a number of new German films made under various licenses, is that the Iron Curtain does not, or not yet, divide the German film-makers ideologically. There is no Hollywood escapism in U.S.-licensed scripts and no dialectic materialism in those sponsored by the Soviets, but a common denominator of realism in almost every German post-war film. As under the circumstances there is little chance of a get-rich-quick career in film production, the ranks of the German film-workers are relatively free from people who regard film production as just another means of making big money. You need considerable enthusiasm to write, direct, or



Steabenbekannitsdraft

Defa

produce films in Germany today, and such enthusiasm usually springs from the conviction that you have to express important ideas in your medium.

Most German film-makers seem to be aware of the fact that their compatriots are still extremely ignorant of the crimes committed at home and abroad with the active or passive assent of the German people during the Nazi regime. A substantial proportion of films are, therefore, aimed at showing German audiences what they were unable or unwilling to see while it happened. Some films probe even deeper into German history, explaining the fateful mistakes made by Germans, and laying bare the roots from which a peaceful renaissance of the people could spring in our time. Quite a number of films deal with the theme of present-day life in beaten and occupied Germany, and with the spiritual and material means to overcome difficulties. In this latter category, screen-writers and directors often display a genuine sense of humour reminiscent of the best traditions of pre-Nazi German film-making.

GERMANS WANT TO SAY "YES"

Thus it seems almost physically impossible for German film-makers to touch anything that does not bear some relation or other to reality, past, present, or future; and the occupying Powers on either side of the Iron Curtain are encouraging the filmworkers in this attitude.

However, the part to be played by the Allied Film Control Officers was—and to some degree still is—greatly misunderstood by the Germans. The first question they asked was invariably, "What films do you want us to

make?", and they were surprised at being told that that would be their own affair. "The Germans at first thought we wanted them to say 'Yes' to everything", I was told by one of the officers at the British Control Commission's Film Branch in Berlin. "Then they got to know us better. The procedure now is that we give our O.K. to the story, and censor the shooting-script for policy, i.e., from the point of view of general rules laid down for education, instruction, entertainment and so on by the Control Commission. What we cannot do is improve on scripts; unfortunately a large number of submitted MSS. are totally unsuitable as to quality".

Today, Mr. S. C. Haig Brown, Head of the Berlin Film Branch, is on the best of terms with German filmworkers, who regard him as a sincere friend, not as their taskmaster. He tries to help them to get what they need, such as raw film stock, which is partly brought over from Britain; when I was in Berlin negotiations were just going on with the Russians to get some stock from factories in their Zone.

At present about 15 production units are licensed by the British. Unfortunately there are no large studios in the British Zone of Germany or the British Sector in Berlin, so these units have to make use of the freely offered U.S. hospitality to shoot in the former EMELKA studios at Geiseltal, near Munich—the only German studios which survived the war without a scratch—and in the former UFA studios in Tempelhof, in Berlin's U.S. Sector. Smaller studios exist in Göttingen, Cologne, Oldenburg and Hamburg, where also most of the dubbing of English films for German audiences is done. New studios are being



Wozzeck

Defa

built in Düsseldorf. The smallest British-licensed studio is one housed in a former school in the Berlin West End, where the visitor can admire the incredible adaptability of German technicians, including the rigging-up of an old dentist's chair as a camera stand. Here, shooting goes on at the record rate of $4\frac{1}{2}$ minutes' screen time per day.

SENSE OF HUMOUR

When I said that recent German films show a genuine sense of humour, I was thinking of a specifically Berlin type of self-irony which finds an outlet in the, so far, best British-licensed picture, *Film ohne Titel* (Film without Title). I discovered only two weak points in this film: one, its disingenuous title; two, its unnecessary introduction of the story proper, showing director, scriptwriter and old-time star, Willy Fritsch, discussing the difficulty of finding a suitable subject for a film, until the scriptwriter tells the actual story. It is a good one and could have easily stood on its own legs. A country girl—this was Hildegard Knef's last role in her short German career before she went to America—moves into the over-cultured home of an art dealer after the house of his business partner, where she has worked as a maid, is destroyed by bombs. During a new air-raid, the art dealer's home is also hit, and the two spend the night together on the only remaining couch (no, he does not take his blanket into the bath tub or to the door-step, as he would have done in an American movie). They lose each other in the turmoil of the last days of the war, until they meet again on the farm of the girl's father. Now the tables are turned: the former housemaid is the much-

coveted farmer's daughter, and he the poor "displaced person". In the end he starts a new life by making the German equivalent of Utility furniture.

Helmuth Käutner, who made a name for himself as the director of the British-licensed *In jenen Tagen* (In those Days), the story of an old motor-car told in seven episodes, wrote the script of *Film ohne Titel*, which was directed by his pupil, Rudolf Jugert. There are numerous "touches", in picture and dialogue, of a subtle humour which shows that there is something universally human about seeing the funny side of things even in times of catastrophe. Käutner and Jugert poke fun at Allied bombs and the crumbling Nazi war machine, but most of all at the Germans themselves. I was surprised how well this film, in spite of that risky self-irony, went down with an average audience when I saw it in a Berlin suburb.

At present, Jugert is making a new comedy, *Hallo, Fräulein*, dealing with American-occupied Germany in the days of non-fratting: also, one should imagine, a risky subject.

RETURN OF ERICH POMMER

Although the Americans have Geiseltage and Tempelhof at their disposal, U.S.-licensed feature production has taken more time to get into its stride than that sponsored by the British, and it is quantitatively less ambitious. As to quality, their aims are high enough. "Re-establishment of the motion picture industry is essential to peacetime German economy", declared the Military Government programme of August, 1947, "and newly produced German

films will be exported. . . . Films produced must support the reorientation programme, and their export to pay for imports of food and critical raw materials will be encouraged. . . . The film industry in Germany is to be reconstituted on a democratic basis, in an independent, decartelised form under the supervision and control of Military Government. . . . German governmental action must be in support of Military Government principles. Government-controlled or subsidised film industry would be contrary to these principles. . . . Policies governing the development of the German film industry within the fused U.S. and British zones will continue to be considered jointly by U.S. and British Military Government officials. . . . Particularly strict requirements have been established in connection with denazification of the film industry. Thus, Germans permitted to engage in the industry in important positions must possess high political and moral standards in addition to professional qualities".

This, of course, is a formidable problem in post-Hitler Germany with thousands of technicians banned from the studios because of their Nazi past, and it will take some time before Mr. Eric Johnston, President of the Motion Picture Association, will see the realisation of his demand that Germans should again be "competitors in the film markets of the world".

On the administrative side, the American authorities could not have done better than to send Erich Pommer to Berlin to get German production in their Zone on its feet again. "We are giving technical help, but we are not responsible for the artistic contents of U.S.-licensed films", he told me. He has succeeded in getting the ruined Tempelhof studios in working order; five to six U.S. and British-licensed films will be made here during 1948-49, with another dozen to be produced at Geiseltasteig. He is "not very happy" about the different licensing procedures in the British, U.S. and French Zones, and hopes for a trizonal licensing machinery.

"Production is going on with very young and unexperienced technicians", he said. "We aim at making B class directors into A class directors as time goes on. But on the whole I am sure that Germany will be a very interesting film country again. So far, these people are used to obeying; they must be taught to take risks. I believe in educating the public through the cinema. The Germans must make films which have some connection with the times and show a way into the future".

THE STORY OF THE JEWS

So far there has been only one outstanding film from U.S.-licensed production. It is called *Lang ist der Weg* (Long is the Road), and scripting as well as direction have been carried out by teams each composed of one Jew and one non-Jew to assure appropriate handling of the difficult story, that of the Polish Jews under Nazi occupation (script: Dr. Kuelb and I. Becker; direction: H. B. Fredersdorf and M. Goldstein). It starts in Warsaw's Jewish quarter in 1939, and shows its inhabitants going through the hell of air-raids, occupation, persecution, deportation and, finally, extermination in the gas chambers. A young man and a girl are among the few survivors, but the real heroine is the boy's mother who returns to the ruins of Warsaw to search for her son until her mind becomes clouded. She is finally discovered among the liberated prisoners at the Dachau concentration camp, and the film

ends with an optimistic scene of the son ploughing a plot of land: one day he will be ploughing his own soil.

In contrast to some German politicians, who think the time is not yet ripe to confront the German people with such stories, it is a fact that all over Germany, with the possible exception of Bavaria, this and similar films on the treatment of the Jews under Hitler have made quite an impression on audiences. The feeling of remorse at what has been done by Germans, the feeling of shame and, sometimes, of guilt—emotions considered indispensable for Germany's spiritual recovery—are known to have been displayed in the cinemas more than on any other occasion.

Zwischen Gestern und Morgen (Between Yesterday and Tomorrow) tells the story of a non-Jewish actor and his Jewish wife (a theme which seems to be a favourite one with German film-makers). Directed by Harald Braun under U.S. licence, it is considerably less effective than it could have been because the story is confused by too many flash-backs, and centred on the recovery of a piece of jewellery from the ruins of a fashionable Munich hotel. Its most memorable impression is the atmosphere in the basement bar of the hotel during an Allied air-raid, but the deaths of the unfortunate actor and his wife leave the spectator cold.

Old-timer Hans Albers, once the favourite UFA screen hero, came out in a *Trümmerfilm*, as the Germans call pictures with ruins as main settings, playing the part of the black-marketeer father of a war-blinded soldier. There is a remarkable sequence in which the soldier, riding through shattered, desolate Berlin in a van, imagines what the town looks like, as he remembers it from pre-war days: with shining shop-windows, gleaming lights, rows of cars and carefree people. . . .

AMERICAN-SPONSORED DOCUMENTARIES

Who would have thought that the Americans, of all people, are now introducing the documentary film into German cinemas? "The development of a documentary film industry is regarded as an integral part of the programme", says the Military Government. Erich Pommer in particular turns out to be deeply interested in the documentary, and the new ones he showed me should prove very useful indeed for the reorientation of German audiences. One of them, *Hunger*, explains—much in the vein of Paul Rotha's *World of Plenty*—the reasons for the world shortage of food; it is mainly aimed at rural audiences, encouraging them to speed up food production. Another one, *Es liegt an Dir* (It's Up to You), tells the story of Germany's national mentality from 1919 to 1948, setting a potentially peaceful Germany against the Nazi Third Reich with its burning of the books and its attempt at world conquest. It shows, in brilliant juxtapositions, what German audiences cannot be shown often enough: how Germany prepared for, and started the war, and how the war came home to their country, with the consequences only too well known to the German people. This two-reeler was made by Wolfgang Kiepenheuer, son of a prominent German publisher, with excellent music by Wolfgang Zeller.

Stuart Schulberg (the brother of Budd, who wrote "What Makes Sammy Run?"), Chief of the U.S. Documentary Film Unit, is also building up a documentary series, *Zeit im Film* (Our Time in the Film), on the lines of *March of Time* and *This Modern Age*, to be produced in Stuttgart. The first of this series, *Die Zeitung* (The Newspaper), has just been completed under the direction of

Wilhelm Reglin. In Berlin, H. B. Fredersdorf has begun to make a series of documentaries on psycho-pathological disturbances as a result of the war, with the ambitious intention of showing neuroses, psychoses and psycho-analytical treatment on the screen—after all that misrepresentation in psychological thrillers for the last ten years!

There is also some British-sponsored documentary activity, as was to be expected after Arthur Elton's work as Film Adviser to the Control Commission. *Black Market*, *V.D.*, *Transport*, *The Rights of Man*, *Local Government* and several films on art appreciation are completed or in production. They were all "farmed out" to numerous small units of young German film-makers, which have sprung up during the last year or two. The Russian-licensed DEFA, too, has embarked on a substantial programme of shorts, but they prefer to call them *Kulturfilm*; indeed, they are produced more on the instructional lines of the old UFA *Kulturfilm* school of Dr. N. Kauffmann than on the lines of our own argumentative documentaries.

Sponsored by all four occupation Powers, the German Africa explorer, Hans Schomburgk, has been able to complete his documentary on the Dark Continent, *Frauen, Masken und Dämonen* (Women, Masks and Demons), which was partly shot by camera-man James Hodgson, F.R.P.S.

UFA INTO DEFA

The French have so far been very reluctant in encouraging German production under their auspices. Two or three feature films are in production in U.S.-licensed studios, mostly with French filmworkers co-operating; one of them is made simultaneously in a German and a French version. But when the new studios at Remagen, with three brilliantly equipped stages, are in working order (presumably this winter), production will start at full speed.

It is little known that Roberto Rossellini's Berlin documentary, *Germany, Year Zero*, was a French-sponsored production which was carried out with the help of Russian-licensed DEFA. France's Film Officer of the Mission Culturelle, M. V. Beguin Billecocq, believes in co-operation between French and German artists and technicians.

Film production in the Soviet Zone is monopolised in DEFA, which has inherited most of what was left of the UFA: the headquarters at Berlin's *Dönhoffplatz*, and the vast studio complexes, partly ruined, in Neubabelsberg and Johannisthal. DEFA is producing more than half of Germany's films, i.e., 20 in 1948-49. The Russians have made the German filmworkers their pampered pets, giving them extra food parcels and Ration Card No. 1. But what about the spirit of the old UFA?

There is little doubt that centralised production facilities are, under present circumstances, a great asset in Germany. DEFA is attracting most of the artistic and technical talent for permanent or temporary work. The Russians, and their German Communist friends, are wisely refraining from exerting any thought-control among artists, apart from the basic requirement that former active Nazis must be excluded. Film stories, although nearly all related to present-day German conditions, or analysing historical developments, are free from dogmatic reasoning, and the Russians don't expect DEFA to turn out another *Potemkin* or *October*.

Many old hands are now working for DEFA: Gerhard Lamprecht, of *Emil and the Detectives* fame, who directed *Irgendwo in Berlin* (Somewhere in Berlin) in 1946; Erich Engel, who is now shooting *Affaire Jakob Blum*, the story

of an anti-Jewish judicial scandal under the Weimar Republic; Gustav von Wangenheim, who spent the war years in Moscow and is now completing his film about the 1848 revolution; S. Dudow, who directed the famous leftist film *Kuhlewampe* in 1931, and has now embarked on a near-Wellsian story, *Weltuntergang* (End of the World).

Among the new talent DEFA has attracted is Wolfgang Staudte, who made *The Murderers are Amongst Us*, post-war Germany's first international success; Boleslav Barlog, who will direct the screen version of a Hebbel poem, and has made a name for himself as theatrical producer in the American Sector of Berlin; Erich Freund, who has been directing a very impressive miners' film *Grube Morgenrot*, based on incidents during the Nazi régime, and reminiscent of Pabst's classic *Kameradschaft* in its realistic pit scenes. Freund spent the war years in London, where he ran a small but highly successful little refugee theatre in Hampstead.

Writers are as scarce at DEFA as they are in the other Zones. Among the old-timers, Fritz Schwiefert and Georg C. Klaren are the most prominent ones; Klaren has been successful with his beautifully produced *Wozzeck*, from the dramatic fragment by the romantic poet, Georg Büchner, who died in 1837, only 23 years of age.

Probably the greatest gain for DEFA is Kurt Maetzig, who wrote and directed *Ehe im Schatten* (Marriage in the Shadow), his first film and so far the most successful one of Germany's new production. Like *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen*, "Marriage in the Shadow" tells the story of a non-Jewish actor and his Jewish wife, based on the tragedy of an unfortunate artists' couple who took their own lives under the Hitler régime. But unlike the U.S.-licensed picture, it tells its story straightforward, concentrating only on the human side of a great love under the most adverse conditions. All the cruelty and sadism of the Nazi system, all the tortures brought to bear on human souls by an infernal State machinery are revived in this immensely moving film, and put on record for all those Germans who refused to see what was going on in their midst. It is a modern Tristan-and-Isolde legend, but its heroes are ordinary people. The film contains the most impressively re-enacted smashing of the Jewish shops in 1938, a scene of savage realism; to enable Maetzig to shoot it the Russian authorities granted him an extra supply of glass, one of Germany's scarcest commodities, to be smashed up by the stormtroopers! Maetzig's next film will be *No pasaran*, the story of the German contingent in the Republican Spanish army during the Civil War.

Thus the panorama of Germany's new film industry, which is emerging slowly from the ruins, unrolls itself before the visitor's eye. Granted peaceful development, it should not be long before more worth-while films will come out from that beaten and shattered country. It must be pointed out, however, that most of them will have limited appeal only, and will not mean much competition on the international film market because of their concern with purely German themes. But they may inspire film-makers everywhere with their realism and their new approach. At present, German film-makers are still busy studying world film production during the last 15 years, and they are extremely lucky inasmuch as Berlin is today the most international of film towns. Since 1946, 40 British, 70 Russian, 80 American, and over 100 French films have been shown in that town—more than at any other place in the world.



Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid

MERMAID AMERICAN (ANN BLYTH)

Universal International

A LETTER FROM AMERICA

By

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

I RETURN TO THESE PAGES after an absence of a year as from a long journey. The circumstances of my absence were such as did not enable me to see many films and of those that I saw I would feel inclined to speak only of two: *Monsieur Verdoux* (long since reviewed in SIGHT AND SOUND) and the new Walt Disney, *Melody Time*. The former represents the world pretty much as it is, the latter as it might be. Indeed, Chaplin, Disney and Vigo would appear to have become the "holy trinity" of the cinema. Chaplin and Vigo illumined the "tragic flaw" in the character of man, whereas to Disney man is still an angel. I think that if Disney ever were to adopt the method of Chaplin and Vigo, employing the almost preternatural technique he has developed, he could break our hearts as not even they were able to do. Zoroaster describes the creation of man as a chance thing: a pair of angels descended to earth and casually tossed small stones over their shoulders as they walked. Where the stones fell, men sprang up; which is to say, man is a thing of chance, but the stones were thrown by angels, so man's origin is not lowly, it is from the angels. At any rate, he is a disconcerting mixture. After recently viewing the French *Les Misérables* again, I was reminded of a news item I read shortly before wherein a priest assisted in the capture and arrest of a man suspected of stealing religious articles from the church of the clergyman. In truth, Victor Hugo was a great writer, for he believed

that man was of the angels and I think it is the function of art to show this whenever it can.

Take, for instance, this idea of Jacques Companeez, the French scenarist. A friendship springs up between the two men imprisoned for a long sentence. One is an uneducated Negro, the other is white, formerly a celebrated musician, an organist. To while away the long prison days, the musician teaches the Negro to play the organ, not on an organ, for the prison has no organ, but on an improvised keyboard which the musician has drawn on long strips of paper. The musician is at last satisfied that the Negro has mastered the fingering of the Bach "Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor" that he has been teaching him these many months and smilingly urges the sceptical Negro when he is freed to try it on the first organ he can get to. On the day the Negro is freed, he enters a church and requests permission to play the organ. The sexton is surprised but permits him to mount to the organ loft. The Negro sits down at the instrument, recognizes the keyboard now so familiar to him—and, after a moment's hesitation, begins to play. The transfiguration of the Negro's face as he hears the music for the first time under his fingers was the climax of the idea. Companeez had long planned to write this scene into one of his scenarios but could never fit it in with the stories he was assigned. It remains unfilmed, but what a cinematic idea it is! What



Miranda

MERMAID BRITISH (GLYNIS JOHNS)

Gainsborough

makes it better than just that is that to Companeez, also, man is of the angels.

Good cinema is where you find it and it seldom is far removed from the god-head in man or from nature. A Mr. Arthur W. Hixson, of Leonia, New Jersey, reports a natural phenomenon that begs for a poet of the camera to record it on film. "Among the many interesting and beautiful sights that one may see on the island of Manhattan there is one that has been noticed by few people. It is a performance of the much maligned starling at eventide. As the setting sun drops behind the Palisades, these birds come in great streams from their feeding grounds in New Jersey, upper Manhattan and the Bronx to roost under the Riverside Drive viaduct over 125th Street. Before settling for the night, the assembled flock, often numbering thousands, rises several hundred feet to form a dense cluster which "explodes" like a star shell, the birds flying from the centre in all directions. They reassemble and repeat the performance three or four times, after which they dive like plummets to their roost under the viaduct.

The Hollywood actress, Virginia Mayo, however, has already been recorded on film, providing her own special kind of poetry to at least one admirer, who places her with the angels, as witness a fan letter that Mlle. Mayo received from no less than Ben Duis Youssef, Sultan of Morocco: "You are not only a big actress", he wrote her, "but a companion in my gay and sad moments. Please be assured that you will always be for me the most striking proof of God's existence".

I feel almost the same way about a trio of young, new actresses, the Milles. Peggy Cummins and Jean Simmons of England and Ann Blyth of America. (One cannot have too many proofs of God's existence, can one?) What is cinema if not for catching the elusive Marie Laurencin-like

eyes of Miss Blyth, which are like the sloe-eyes of the gentle horses of Franz Marc?

Besides, I have grown weary of film plots as such, since films rarely have anything new to say. (It is only sometimes in their manner of saying it that a *L'Atalante*, *The Kid* or *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* startle us with something unprecedented in art.) The first bull-moose who locked horns with another bull moose over a female moose unwittingly wrote the first movie plot and that, you will admit, was a long time ago.

What remains then, since perhaps the film is *not* a medium for the expression of ideas, but rather one for the expression of sensual images and movement? Remains: imagery, whether of Miss Blyth, the "Bumble Boogie" sequence of *Melody Time*, the transfiguration of Verdoux just before he is led off to his execution, or Michel Simon in *L'Atalante*. Imagery wedded to style, or an outgrowth of it, *but imagery which is inevitable*, as the way *Potemkin* was told was inevitable, or *The Last Laugh* or *Dream Street* or *Moana* or *Wild Oranges*, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *Underworld* or *Sous les Toits de Paris*.

And yet, in the last analysis, they and others of that esteemed hierarchy are not more than a catalogue of fondly-remembered names. Their influence, save in isolated instances, has been almost non-existent. There has been no cumulative growth and development. There has been technological progress, like the atom bomb is technological progress.

Anyway, it's all relative. Some films are really original creations in the medium. Others are good only in relation to other and less good films. In comparison with any first-rate work of art in the other mediums, they have no stature at all. Tolstoi's opening line in *Anna Karenina* is worth all the films ever made.

THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL FILMS IN BRITAIN

The production of medical films for all groups of the community is on the threshold of a great expansion. Dr. BRIAN STANFORD, M.R.C.S., D.M.R., F.R.P.S., a member of the Medical Committee of the Scientific Film Association and for some years its honorary secretary, gives here an account of the past based on his work as a cataloguer and foreshadows some likely developments.

THE WOULD-BE USER OF FILMS on medicine is in a unique position as compared with any other science, for there is available to him a complete list of all the films in Great Britain on this subject. The cataloguing work undertaken in 1946 by the Scientific Film Association and the Royal Society of Medicine went on full-time for over a year with a staff of three people. During that time 1,200 films were indexed, and 800 screened and a summary of content recorded. This work was published last autumn by ASLIB as the "RSM/SFA Catalogue of Medical Films". The published catalogue lists in Part I the titles of the 800, and gives in Part II abbreviated synopses for 200 of these—a tantalising procedure, for the reader is left to wonder whether one of the other 600 is more suited to his purpose. There were, however, two good reasons for this apparent defect. Firstly the work was originally undertaken as a survey of existing films, and the owners—many of them private individuals owning only the original copy—had been assured that in giving information about their films they would not be committed to lending it to anybody. The Scientific Film Association has noted which of these films merit preservation and issue, and is continually seeking means of making them available; indeed a few of these films have already been issued in this way which would otherwise have remained unknown and unused. The second reason is that the catalogue was prepared for press two years before it finally appeared, and at that time paper shortage was so acute that a larger publication could not be envisaged. That only 800 were viewed of the 1,200 indexed also needs explanation, and here again there are two reasons. Firstly, a simple question of finance. This might have been overcome, but there was also a feeling that the work so far completed presented a clear enough picture of the existing state of affairs which further work would be unlikely to alter.

The overall impression gained was that the great bulk of medical films were amateur productions of little value to anyone other than their originator. This is not altogether surprising, but it must be admitted that at the outset we had higher hopes. Film-making even at an amateur level is an expensive procedure, and it seemed reasonable to expect that the films would be sufficiently well made to be of teaching value to others, and so the initial cost justified by a broadened audience. However, it seems likely that even their originators were often disappointed, for that at least would explain why so many people have made one or two films, but so few have made many; and this suggestion

is supported by the opinion that those who had made many had usually made good ones.

Who then made all these films? Nearly half those listed in the Subject Group index are collected into only five of the 60 groups given, those five being neurology, obstetrics, physiology, public health and surgery. Most of the neurological films come from two university departments, and are not available outside those universities. These are mainly short case-records of the kind that would be used everywhere if they were available on loan: the photography is not of a very high order, but the clinical content is good, and it does seem a pity that they cannot be distributed widely. The obstetric films come from a wide variety of sources, mainly from individual surgeons, and contain a wholly disproportionate number of records of Cæsarean section, of which unfortunately only two or three are of any use for student teaching; Professor de Lee's films on the other hand are excellent, the one on eclampsia being outstanding. Of the physiological films listed a large group was made in the course of experiments at one university 20 years or more ago and are not available; the remainder from a wide variety of sources are often of good teaching value for, like the neurology films, they are short films recording indisputable facts, and so can be fruitfully used by anyone. This is more than can be said for the bulk of the surgical films, most of which show very little of teaching value; they are mainly records of individual procedures, many of which are of but little interest to anyone except the originator. The public health films come from many sources, but these differ from the others in having been sponsored more often by societies and groups than by individuals. Many which are old now are difficult to use, for being simple in treatment and dealing with their subjects in a dramatic manner they often cease to be effective with the changing of fashions, whether of clothing or of thought. A large group of more recent ones are those produced by the fighting services, which are therefore of limited use; but the Central Film Library collection is first-class, and has been very extensively used, especially by the mobile projector vans of the Ministry of Information.

From this cataloguing work then we have learnt that less than half of the medical films in this country are available for circulation; and furthermore that most of those which are not available, as well as a fair proportion of those that are available, are unsuitable for widespread use.

This may seem on first sight a depressing conclusion to draw from so much effort. But it is not really as bad as all that, for we have been considering the films accumulated almost since medical films were first made. This catalogue contains a great number of experimental films, and they cannot all be expected to be successful. Furthermore the production period falls into two quite distinct periods: i.e., pre-1939, when most of the films were made by amateurs, and war-time and after, when the majority were, as they still are, professional productions. We have in fact two experimental beginnings, and while it is true that the professionals made polished productions quite early, it is only recently that they have gained sufficient experience to make films of real teaching merit. On the other hand the amateurs are still in eclipse, for to them film-stock is virtually unobtainable and the cost of cameras now prohibitive; it is ten years since they made films, and their tradition, slight as it was, is moribund or may in fact be dead, for we have learnt that the making of films is both complex and costly, and amateur effort may well become canalised into the hospital photographic departments now being established in many teaching centres. We will return to this point shortly.

WHAT DO WE EXPECT?

Before going further, let us pause to consider what we expect of the film in medicine. What is its function, what do we wish it to do for us? And who is to make it? We want it to teach, of course; to teach us both facts and also ways of thinking. If we are to be doctors we should learn both how to treat a disease and how to reassure the worries of the person so diseased; if we are to be citizens we should learn both how to keep our drains clean and why it is desirable that drains be kept clean. Now these are often quite different limits of film. The factual instructional film is often simple to make in terms of camera, in fact the more simply it is made the better it will usually teach; but its value depends very much on a precise presentation of the subject in all its close detail and its relationships to allied subjects, as well as to its being presented in a manner which fits neatly into the general teaching pattern. In short, it needs teaching ability above all else: the camera here is an extension of the teacher's armamentarium, and its usefulness depends on the way the teacher uses it. In fact the more depersonalised the film is the more it can be used. This explains why teachers' enquiries about films listed in the catalogue have been mainly for case-records, for portrayals of indisputable fact having no other teachers' opinions in them, and capable of being used by each teacher in his own style. These films are often short—a minute or even less is sometimes all that is needed—but they present their subject with an emphasis which points unmistakably to their maker: first-class medicine is too often presented by indifferent photography.

But they are welcome indication that this state of affairs is changing for the better. Teaching hospitals all over the country are setting up photographic departments, many of which are being equipped to make films as well as still photographs. The camera operators here are men and women who have learned the special needs of their

subject, and their films will be of a corresponding quality: some indeed are qualified doctors who have taken up clinical photography as their speciality. They are planning, through the schemes organised by the Scientific Film Association and the University Films Council to exchange information about films in the making, and also to lend each other finished films, so making available to all a common pool of good films designed by teachers and made by specialist teachers' assistants.

NOT SLIPSHOD

On the other hand, the films which present ideas rather than facts will often be ambitious projects, possibly with a dramatic approach, appealing more often to the emotions than the critical intellect. These cannot afford to be slipshod in camera-craft: indeed, slight lapses in medical accuracy may often pass unnoticed petty items lost in the depths of the major theme. These films are beyond the scope of the medical photographer; they belong to the realm of the professional film-maker who, once he has understood the problem, needs medical advice only to give accurate "local colour". So it is not the scale of the film, the cost, which determines the method of production, but the purpose of the film. It would be as wrong, and as wasteful, for the medical photographer to embark on an emotive film as it would be for the film-maker with all his dramatic training to make a case-record. Yet the dividing-line is not quite as sharp as that, for films cannot be divided rigidly into classes; there are borderline cases which can suitably be approached by either group: simple instructional films designed for a popular audience will properly be made by one or the other depending only on their scope—and the inclinations of the group.

This brings us naturally to considering our audience, for gone are the days when a film was made without clear emphasis on the intended audience and their assumed knowledge level. Here classification is even more arbitrary, but for the sake of convenience we will consider four audience-groups: medical students and doctors; nurses; the general lay public, including such specialised groupings as expectant mothers, first-aiders, or women's guilds; and specialised para-medical groups such as pharmacists, physiotherapists or opticians.

HELP FOR G.P.'S

It is clear that a film designed for any one group may be used under suitable circumstances for any other, but that must be considered as a by-product and should not be specially catered for in one-and-the-same film; if it becomes a major consideration, then the film should be made in more than one version.

Medical students are likely to be well catered for by their hospital photographic departments, which will also produce most of the films for post-graduate training of specialists. But the general practitioner is not catered for at present except by an occasional film made by a drug house, and this is to be regretted, for the general practitioner is a hard-working man who finds little time for extensive reading, and the conciseness and vividness of the film

makes a ready appeal to him. There is opportunity here for a regular series of films designed as "refreshers" to present new interpretations of old problems, and the Scientific Film Association has presented a memorandum to the Minister of Health containing proposals which includes this as well as several of the suggestions which follow.

The training of nurses after July 5th will fall largely into the hands of the Minister of Health, for whereas all medical students are taught in hospitals which do not come directly under his control, the majority of nurses are trained in the hospitals which come under his administration with the New Health Services Act. This is an interesting if unforeseen outcome, for it means that the Minister, faced with a shortage of nurses, will also have to accept responsibility for any defects in their training. We can, therefore, confidently expect a steady stream of single teaching films designed for nurses, for we shall have the productive potentialities of the Ministry of Health allied to the Sister-Tutors, who have been in the past the greatest single group of users of medical films.

The New Health Services Act may not have so marked an effect on films for the general public, for there is already a strong tradition at the Ministry to look after their interests, and a programme of production is steadily growing. However, it seems likely that the medical resources of our country will be severely strained for some years to come, and a series of films designed to show large groups of the community "How to live with your Disability" would be a useful measure, both to inform the sufferers and to advise their family group. Such diseases as tuberculosis, diabetes and rheumatism come readily to mind, while the less spectacular but possibly more aggravating bronchitis should not be forgotten.

Films for the specialised para-medical groups will probably continue to be sponsored largely by their own representative bodies, helped by the doctors, hospitals, or business houses who are particularly interested in aspects of their work.

Yet all this production activity is stultified in the absence of a central library from which the films can be borrowed. To this problem there is as yet no indication of an answer. The medical schools would be unwise to start their own lending sections, for multiplicity of sources is a grave inconvenience to borrowers, and increases immeasurably the difficulty of tracing films. A centralised universities' Library is out of keeping with our traditions, but some overall organisation which also was supported by the universities might be acceptable to all. Yet in the end effective training of medical personnel is now of prime interest to the state, and it is clear that the only really satisfactory solution is the establishment of a comprehensive and fluid medical section of the Central Film Library open to all to borrow from freely. Anything less than this leads only to chaos, for who would say that all specialised surgical films are invariably unsuitable for a Women's Institute meeting, or that a record of a human disease should be withheld on administrative grounds from a group of veterinary students?

The future production of medical films will be influenced then by three new developments: the hospital photographic departments, the New Health Services Act, and the successful formation of a centralised medical film library. Even if the outcome cannot be predicted in detail, we can confidently look forward to it in happy expectation.

EDINBURGH 1948

EDINBURGH'S INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL of Documentary Films, introduced last year, is still Britain's only international film festival. The event attracted last year an entry of seventy-five films from eighteen countries and the programmes were seen by an international audience totalling many thousands.

This year, the Festival is being held on an even more ambitious scale. The performances are being extended over three weeks and will total nearly fifty. Anyone spending even a single week at the Festival will have a unique opportunity of seeing an international collection of the latest documentary films.

The documentary method of film-making, which puts its faith in the living fact of everyday life rather than in the fiction of the film studio, first became a movement in Britain under the leadership of John Grierson. Since the early 'thirties, it has been adopted and adapted by every forward-looking country in the world. Each country has produced its own variant of the British model. In France, for example, it has done some service to the sister arts of painting and sculpture. In Denmark, the documentary contributed signally to the revival of the Italian cinema. These and the other variations give the stimulus of variety to a Festival of Documentary Films. For the audiences, there is the pleasure of making contact with life in different countries. For the film-maker, there is the refreshment of comparison and this, as we have noted since last year, can have its influence on technique.

This year's Festival will be at least as international in character as last year. Active interest has been shown in the event by film-makers in the major producing countries in Europe, in the United States, in the Dominions and in such little-known film countries as China and the Argentine.

THE PROGRAMMES

The Festival will open on August 22nd with the world première of *The Louisiana Story*, Robert Flaherty's newly completed production. No more appropriate film could have been secured to open the Festival than this dramatic fantasy of a Cajun boy in the Bayou marshlands by the director who is esteemed everywhere as the grand old man of the documentary movement.

Two special programmes will be included. One will be devoted to Scottish films and the premières of documentaries on Scottish life will be given, together with the new version of Michael Powell's memorable film of Foulca, *Edge of the World*. The other will be a programme of children's films drawn from international sources and arranged with the co-operation of the Advisory Council on Children's Entertainment Films.

The principal performances, including the important feature films, will be held in the Caley Picture House, Lothian Road, on Sunday, August 22nd, at 7.15 p.m., and on August 29th and September 5th and 12th at 2.30 p.m. and 7.15 p.m. Admission charges: 2s. 6d., 3s. and 5s.

Week-day performances will be given at 2.30 p.m. and 8 p.m. from August 23rd until September 11th, in the Film Guild Theatre, Film House, 6-8, Hill Street. In this intimate little cinema programmes of specialised films will be repeated several times over the period of the Festival.

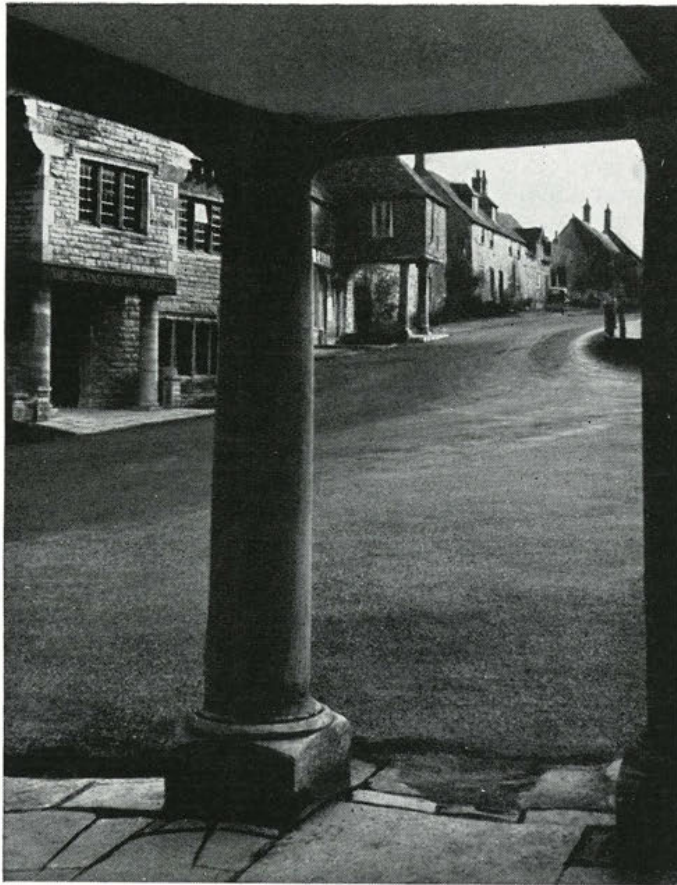
Three specialised programmes of films designed for educational purposes will be shown in the Central Hall, Tollcross, on Wednesdays, August 25th and September 1st and 8th. This follows the success of an experimental programme of school films arranged last year.

The programme of children's films will be given in the Rutland Picture House at 10 a.m. on Saturday, September 4th.

The Festival is organised by the Edinburgh Film Guild. Represented on the Festival Advisory Committee are the documentary associations: the Association of Specialised Film Producers, British Documentary, the Federation of Documentary Film Units, and Film Centre; and the other organisations represented include the British Film Academy, the Central Office of Information, the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, the Edinburgh Scientific Film Society, the Scottish Educational Film Association, the Scottish Film Council, the Scottish Information Office and U.N.E.S.C.O.

Tickets and further information are available from the Festival ticket agencies or from the Edinburgh Film Guild, Film House, 6-8, Hill Street, Edinburgh, 2 (Telephone: 34203).

FORSYTH HARDY.



Ancient Stones

Dawn Trust

THE HUBBUB AROUSED by Miss Blandish and her orchids has occasioned much discussion on the question of censorship. There is nothing very remarkable in this; it happens periodically, like the story of the sea-serpent. The papers are filled with partisan correspondence for a week or two; indignation on the one hand and sarcasm on the other. Then the excitement dies down and the exhibitors begin to pray for another film to be denounced by the moralists.

The curious thing is that nobody seems to bother to examine the problems connected with the question in a dispassionate manner. Wild charges of intolerance and bigotry are made by the writers in the film Trade Journals. The Church is made the scapegoat for the idiosyncracies of narrow-minded zealots in all walks of life. It is assumed that the only motive for adverse criticism of a film is prudery. In the case of *No Orchids For Miss Blandish*, one of the Trade Journals indulged in an astonishing spate of insulting and pejorative phrases and epithets. "Narrow-minded bigots". "Jaundiced, wrong-headed, short-sighted and intolerant bigot". "Satisfied, saintly, stiff-necked . . . eyes uplifted—en route to heaven". This kind of thing is hardly worth bothering about except that it is necessary, I think, to show that the Church is not quite the blind and out-of-touch reactionary force that such outbursts would imply. The Church has a positive and constructive attitude towards the cinema—an attitude that is not nullified by the occasional clerical *obita dicta* which gain the notoriety of reference in the Press when some unconsidered statement is made about films in the local pulpit.

THE CHURCH, THE CINEMA AND CENSORSHIP

By

FATHER JOHN A. V. BURKE

To avoid confusion and for the sake of precision, I must make it clear that as I am a Catholic priest writing in my capacity as a member of the *Office Catholique International du Cinema*, the official Catholic Cinema Office, I cannot claim any competence to interpret the mind of the Church of England on this question. I have no doubt, however, that, broadly speaking, what I have to say would meet with the agreement of most official Church representatives, and that only those who persistently regard entertainment of any kind as fraught with moral danger would care to contest it.

Let us look at the question of Censorship. People are apt to overlook the fact that some kind of censorship or control is necessary, at least in theory, wherever there is an authority charged with the material or moral well-being of others. To judge by the recent outcry in the Press, it might be supposed that censorship was, of its nature, outrageous and offensive to the notion of true freedom. In fact, all civilised people recognise that the State, deriving its mandate from its duty to the families who compose it, has the task of supervising and scrutinising, at least from time to time, the books, plays and other forms of propaganda in order to assure itself that public propriety is not being offended. About the *fact*, no one will dispute. It is the extent to which and the means by which this function is exercised that legitimately gives rise to resentment in certain cases.

NOT OUT OF TOUCH

The Church, though it has no power of physical compulsion in this matter, yet claims the right and has the duty of informing its subjects with regard to the ethics of any particular form of propaganda. The official attitude of the Church towards the cinema as towards other expressions of man's cultural and artistic activity is one of constructive criticism (using that word in its proper sense of exercising judgment and appraisal). It is not, as is often erroneously supposed, out of touch with the march of modern developments in the scientific and artistic fields. The existence of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and the various Offices concerned with music and literature are sufficient guarantee of that. The fact that it preaches prudence and the sanctity of the moral law does not mean that it decries or outlaws legitimate entertainment.

It is sometimes thought that the interest of the Church in the cinema is of recent growth. In fact, the Encyclical Letter, *Vigilanti Cura*, which deals with *The Use and*

Misuse of Films, published in 1936, was itself the culminating point of a whole series of Papal utterances on the work of the Church with reference to films, dating from 1920.

The occasion of the Encyclical was to offer congratulations to the American Legion of Decency, which, organised two years previously, had already achieved an astonishing success in putting a curb to the tendency to produce licentious and immoral films.

Having praised the work of the Legion, Pius XI goes on to point out that the film is a powerful influence which can be used either for good or ill. He refers to it as an art, to which must be applied the rule that governs all art, namely, the rule of natural morality; for since "the essential purpose of art, its *raison d'être*, is to assist in the perfection of the moral personality, which is man, it must itself be moral".

A CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE

In view of the fact that the occasional condemnation of a film on moral grounds receives rather more publicity than the constructive attitude which is the Church's traditional one, it is well to notice that Pope Pius XI insists that the work of those in the Church who are concerned with film "is to restore wise standards, *both artistic and moral*, to the cinema". He recognises the part that the cinema has come to play in the life of modern man. "Recreation", he says, "has become a necessity for people who work under the fatiguing conditions of modern industry". But he goes on at once to point out that "it must be worthy of the rational nature of man and must, therefore, be morally healthy".

Sentiments such as these are echoed in the Foreword which Oliver Bell, M.A., Director of the British Film Institute, contributes to Dr. Wollenberg's *Anatomy of the Film*. "Those of us who are concerned in some degree to consider the implications of this new invention, are always astonished at the indifference displayed towards the new medium by people who could claim in other respects to be fully educated. This is the greater misfortune as never was a medium more in need of intelligent interest and guidance than is the film". It is the main object of Catholic interest in the cinema to seek to elevate it to the rank of a positive factor for good, a culturally significant influence; to enable it to contribute its measure to the sum total of human happiness and pleasure as the best works in the other arts have done, whether music, painting or literature.

Pius XI would certainly applaud and second Mr. Bell's desire that a chair of cinematography be founded in one of the British Universities (as has already been done in the University of Paris) so that there may be worked out in greater detail a basic philosophy of the film. The Pope says: "We can never sufficiently praise all those who have dedicated or who are to dedicate themselves to the noble cause of raising the standard of the motion picture to meet the needs of education and the requirements of the Christian conscience". There is no word here of the merely

negative condemnation which is thought by many to be the main preoccupation of the Church with films. Pius goes on to say: "Why, indeed, should there be question merely of avoiding what is evil? The motion picture should not be simply a means of diversion, a light relaxation to occupy an idle hour; with its magnificent power it can and must be a bearer of light and a positive guide to what is good".

The vigorous protests uttered by the exhibitors against the condemnation of films like *No Orchids For Miss Blandish* are quite understandable. If people follow the lead of the critics, the producers are going to lose money. But their efforts to justify their attitude, where they are not blatantly moved by sheer self-interest, are somewhat naïve. To say, as they do, that because the newspapers report crime and violence, sexual aberrations and sadistic monstrosities, therefore the film has the right to do so too, is to ignore the special danger which belongs to the film in showing what is evil. To describe in print what is sensational and sordid is one thing, a bad thing; to describe it in action on the film is a far more reprehensible thing. It is a fact of elementary psychology that what is seen is more compelling to the imagination than what is read or described. "The power of the motion picture", says Pius XI, "consists in this, that it speaks by means of vivid and concrete imagery which the mind takes in with enjoyment and without fatigue. Even the crudest and most primitive minds are captivated by the cinema. In place of the effort which reading or listening demands, there is the continued pleasure of a succession of concrete and, so to speak, living pictures". Though no one suggests that all films are evil or that even violent ones are necessarily bad, it has to be recognised that where objectionable elements enter into a film they are capable of doing much damage to the souls of sensitive or mentally ill-equipped persons, especially adolescents. "They seduce young people along the ways of evil by glorifying the passions; they show life under a false light; they cloud ideals; they destroy pure love, respect for marriage, affection for the family. They are capable also of creating prejudices among individuals and misunderstandings among nations, among social classes, among entire races".

These words are not those of an authority that is concerned merely to condemn innocent enjoyment. They are the wise teaching of one who has much experience of human nature and recognises the harmful elements in the most powerful of the instruments for influencing the minds of people. That this teaching is also positive and constructive the final quotation we have room for will demonstrate. "Good motion pictures are capable of exercising a profoundly moral influence upon those who see them. In addition to affording recreation they are able to arouse noble ideals of life, to communicate valuable conceptions, to impart a better knowledge of the history and the beauties of the Fatherland and of other countries, to present truth and virtue under attractive forms, to create, or at least to favour understanding among nations, social classes, and races, to champion the cause of justice, to give new life to the claims of virtue and to contribute positively to the genesis of a just social order in the world". Let the altruistic producer of films ponder these words and put them into film action.



Cantinflas Boxeador

P.O.S.A. Films

MEXICO'S CHAPLIN

By

BETTY ROSS

IN THE ART OF MARIO MORENO, better known as "Cantinflas", Mexico's outstanding film comedian and idol of the Spanish-speaking world from South America to Spain, one can trace the direct influence of his country's blood-stained history and its exotic geographical position, lying at the meeting-place of the temperate and torrid zones.

One must know something about both these features in order to understand why this actor, whose comedy needs no story or dialogue, has captured the Mexican public. A master pantomimist, he depends on mimicry and an exquisite sense of timing; the speeches he does make are literally gibberish, always mirth-provoking, yet with an

element of reality, for equally unintelligible do Mexicans find the dialect of Indians in different regions of their far-flung Republic.

For the barriers of communications and of language, both so vital to a living theatre, have been raised by the vagaries, however delightful, of the volcanoes, mountains, plateaux and lush valleys of the Mexican Republic, which anthropologists sometimes call the "cradle of the American race".

In no other country in the world can one pass so rapidly from zone to zone; here, within twelve hours, one can move from the heat of tropics to perpetual winter. You may spend

the morning basking under a palm; by afternoon you can be ascending a snow-peak.

Yet there are still numerous mountain regions that have never yet been penetrated by the white man; many "lost" cities in the heart of a jungle that suggest vanished civilizations, who did not even leave behind the name of their tribes. Remnants of their descendants still carry on a nomad existence, with their pagan cults. In strong contrast to this is the sophisticated, progressive capital, Mexico City.

This rises over a mile above sea level. Ringed around by green mountains and snow-mantled volcanoes, it is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Yet how difficult it makes it to find a common denominator of expression for Mexico's people. Only a gifted mummer, such as appeared in Mario Moreno, could strike the note of universal feeling in this land of contrasts.

THE BACKGROUND

Fourth in size on the American Continent, with a population of over twenty millions, of which almost three-quarters are *mestizas*, of mixed Indian and Spanish blood, Mexico ranked first in culture and artistic achievement, years before Columbus came to America.

But during the Spanish Conquest Mexicans had not very much opportunity for creative expression. They saw the invaders torture an Aztec Emperor and nobles, confiscate all land and property, and enslave their race. During the 300 years of this domination the Spaniards had erected theatres which produced plays by their own authors. Mexicans themselves had very little opportunity to attend the performances which were mainly for raising funds for charitable organisations. Indeed, the first edifice especially designed as a theatre stood near the cemetery of the Royal Hospital for Indians, whose expenses the theatre aimed to provide. The poor Indian spectators were allowed inside a *patio*, for standing room only, where a partition separated the men and the women.

But by 1917 a new Mexico was born and the drama of this revolution affected every phase of Mexican life. Labourers found new hope, artists, musicians and writers new inspiration.

Soon the theatre felt its influence. Hitherto Mexicans had imitated Spanish playwrights and even produced Spanish musical comedies. Now Mexicans turned to modern and national themes, using the stage as the mouth-piece of the people, to satirise local politicians, the stormy petrels who kept causing the numerous revolutions which deposed succeeding governments in quick succession. Themes with irony and satire, presented with biting wit, attracted larger audiences than musical shows or impassioned plays about love-lorn señoritas with romantic suitors and long cloaks. This helps to explain the present popularity of a Cantinflas burlesque! Who knows how many revolutions were averted because audiences and actors blew off political steam at the theatre!

These performances were usually held in a *carpa* or tent-show, one of the earliest phases of the Mexican theatre. These *carpas*, with their hastily improvised performances and their crude audiences, managed to create a theatre public, especially in Mexico's capital, where the *carpa* often set up in a poor section of the city. There

Indian vendors sit cross-legged on the ground beside their wares, mounds of fruit, vegetables, *tortillas*, flanked by flowers whose colours reflect the glory of Mexico's skies and sunsets.

THE MAN

Thus it came about that when Mario Moreno, born in this poor quarter of Mexico City where his father was a postman, was forced to leave school at an early age, he found work in a *carpa*. As the company was poor and small he was eventually given "bits" to play. He might have continued there for years unnoticed if a principal actor had not failed to come to a performance. The owner of the *carpa*, in desperation, pushed young Mario before the audience and told him to do something or say something until a substitute performer could be found.

The startled youth began to talk but not in words or language that anyone had ever before heard. From him poured such a flow of nonsense and gibberish that the audience roared its applause. One enthusiastic spectator likewise called out a nonsensical word, "Cantinflas"! This brought another laugh, and Mario, who liked the sound of the word, decided to keep it as his stage name.

From that day on his nonsense speech became part of the show. When he was promoted and began earning five pesos a day (five shillings) Mario was emboldened to propose to the star of the *carpa*, the fair Valentina, a Russian dancer. As her salary was three pesos a day, Mario said she could marry him for money if she wished! She still shares his fortune today.

Soon Cantinflas was headlining in the "Follies"; his costume had not changed, but his audience had. Everyone quoted his quips and revelled in his mimicry and nonsense.

Several years later he entered films—also with his left foot. *Posa*—an advertising company—engaged him for a series of commercial film "shorts", selling beer and soft drinks. This brought Cantinflas to the screen; as though by magic, every cinema was filled. Managers competed for the "shorts", offering to pay for them although they were distributed free.

This gave the advertising manager an idea; why not make a full-length film with Cantinflas?

So successful was the result that the Posa Advertising Company became the Posa Film Company and led the way for Mexico's film production which was just beginning to stir in those days. Cantinflas is still the exclusive star of Posa Films, and practically a one-man show; no one seems to remember his feminine leads or co-actors. The producing company, of which he himself is vice-president, brings record-breaking comedies to Mexican theatres, scoring box-office receipts greater than were reached by Chaplin in *The Great Dictator*, or by *Gone With The Wind* and *Rebecca*.

Usually Cantinflas plays the *pelado*, rough-neck, he often burlesque classics, as in *The Three Musketeers* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but is at his best in stories and scenes depicting the life of Mexico's working class. He reflects their poverty and enhances it, while using his body with the same exquisite sense of timing as Chaplin, who said of him: "No better clown was ever born".

THE APPEARANCE

You would recognise him anywhere by his gazelle-soft eyes, his pendulous lower lip, and the trousers which are kept up—never quite far enough—by no apparent human agency. His coat—so worn that it is reduced to just one string; a kerchief around his throat, worn even with evening dress; and outsize shoes—one black and one tan, identify Latin-America's greatest comedian.

Actually, this dress is not pure invention; an Indian peasant sees it as a satire of his own wardrobe, which more or less is in this state; that may be one reason why Cantinflas clings to this costume in practically every film; whether he plays the part of bull-fighter, millionaire, tramp, soldier or policeman. His wistful look owes something to his queer little moustache, which grows in two parts at the side of his mouth in Aztec Indian fashion.

It even transfigures his likeness—a figure made of cloth, clay or rubber which is as familiar to Spanish-speaking film fans as Mickey Mouse. You see it hanging inside homes, displayed in shop-windows, or swinging from the windshield of a taxicab or bus taking you around the picturesque streets of sun-drenched Mexico City, where the Old World still rubs shoulders with the New. . . .

At thirty-seven, Mario Moreno—Cantinflas to his legion of admirers—is considered the greatest draw in every Spanish-language theatre, from South America with its audience of 120 million people to Spain where he was almost mobbed recently when he made personal appearances there.

THE INTERVIEW

When I sought out the famous comedian at his home in a fashionable quarter of Mexico City, a serious-eyed young man of medium height, looking nearer thirty than forty, perfectly groomed and wearing grey flannels and a dark red pullover, greeted me. About him was no trace of the shabby comic figure the public loves.

Like most comedians, he sat silent and thoughtful, then remarked, "Mexicans are sad; they have suffered a great deal and want to laugh. In films they like to see others suffer, but only if they know that these misfortunes will end amusingly. They like situations that deal with love, especially if the young man has many refusals and rebuffs".

Refusals and rebuffs make up Cantinflas' stock-in-trade, for, like Chaplin, he always plays the underdog or the misfit to whom troubles never come singly and who was not born to conquer.

His humour is purely Mexican, he says, and reflects the types whose life he mirrors. In the everyday life of the people he seeks ideas for his comedies. Thus he often strolls through the poorer sections of the city. And then, "*observo mucho*", he stressed in Spanish, in which language we chatted, although he speaks a little English and some Russian.

When I mentioned the double-talk, always an amusing feature of his hilarious performance, he smiled—for the first time.

"Where those words come from I don't know. I never know what I'll say next".

For that matter, no one does, for he cuts out most of the dialogue from his script and replaces it by quips or nonsense invented on the spur of the moment.

But despite his impromptu acting and spontaneous dialogue, he invariably finishes the speeches with the same sentence to give the other actors their cue.

"But if you do not rehearse your speeches beforehand, how do you know they will bring a laugh?"

"Instinctively, *before* I hear the people laugh, I know they will", he insisted. "There are some things one *feels*. Even when there is straight dialogue, I don't like to prepare my lines in advance, and I can't bear rehearsals. To plan out everything minutely beforehand upsets me. On a few occasions I did think up precisely what to do on the set, but when I began to act everything came out differently!" A smile lit up his eyes, entirely changing his expression, showing for a moment the wistful Cantinflas that flits across the screen.

Lavishly he praises Charlie Chaplin, but declares that he would never borrow mannerisms from him, or from any other comedian. "By such imitations many a good artist loses himself. . . ."

It is interesting to note he rarely refers to himself as an actor, but as an observer. "Is it an unusual gift", he wonders aloud, "which makes me see everything in its comic side? I can listen to the most serious political or scientific discussion, then repeat it immediately—and make everyone laugh". If he repeats it without words even heartier is the laughter that rewards him.

SUCKSDORFF

(continued from page 63)

make of them; and, the night before shooting, he works out his shots in detail. Since he is his own cameraman, he knows the camera's possibilities and limitations. Having seen all of his films, I feel he has done things with his camera which many experienced photographers would regard as impossible.

Sucksdorff is both sensitive and modest to an exceptional degree. When he is describing an idea for a new film, he will do so in masterly visual language, so that the film grows before your eyes; but all the time he will be bracing himself for an expected adverse verdict. When you praise his idea, his eyes light up and a burden has obviously gone from his mind. When he is making a film, he becomes completely absorbed in it: he does not feed properly, never shaves, and sleeps anywhere, often out of doors. None of this is affectation; he is happily unaware of everything but his film.

I have no doubt that Arne Sucksdorff has remarkable talent. The film is his natural medium of expression and, for so young a director, he has an astonishing command of it. He has reached an important stage in his development: his work has skill and feeling and, in a narrow range, depth; but he has still to find breadth to work out the implications of his personal philosophy. For this reason, his new films which are to be shown at the Edinburgh Festival will be watched with unusual interest. It may be too soon, however, to look for this broadening basis for his work and premature critical analysis must not be allowed to smother so promising a film talent.



DENMARK BEHIND THE POLAR CIRCLE

By

RAGNA JACKSON

IT IS A RATHER SAD FACT that nine out of ten feature films are so insignificant or downright bad that one is inclined to despair of the cinema and its future. This is perhaps the reason why documentaries so often are received with such enthusiasm in certain quarters.

To this category belongs the new colour film from Greenland, *Denmark behind the Polar Circle*. It was taken in Summer, 1947, during the Danish expedition to the East coast of Greenland for further exploration into Pearyland. In spite of many expeditions, which have cost the lives of numerous men, a great part of this Arctic country is still unknown.

The 1947 expedition was the forerunner of further expeditions planned for 1948-50 and they are of vital importance. Not only from a scientific point of view for archaeology, botany, zoology, etc., but since the last war Greenland has come very much into the limelight. It is an important aircraft-base and, with the not too encouraging development in international politics, it is quite obvious

what a paramount part this great Danish island—formerly regarded as a safe retreat from “civilization”—may play.

However, the chief aim of the Pearyland expedition, subsidised by the Danish state and private means, was not to drag Denmark into the strained atmosphere of the big powers. Even if it is possible that there may be some purely practical results the main object is scientific.

This first expedition was lead by Count Eigil Knuth and Ebbe Munck. The latter, who showed the film at the Geographical Society, is at present press-attaché at the Danish Embassy in London. He belongs to that rare type who, in spite of being a university graduate and having a long experience as journalist and editor, has never been satisfied to settle down to the comfortable life he so easily might obtain. Whenever he has been able to do so, he has escaped from civilized surroundings and tempted the perilous and adventurous life a man finds in contact with the immense and cruel nature of the Arctic. Seven times he has been to Greenland, taking part in Danish, French,

British and American expeditions, and during the war was naturally one of the founders of the Danish resistance, and during the whole time of the occupation did extremely important work in keeping contact between the Allies and Denmark.

The film taken in 1947 gives a very lively impression of the work of this kind of men, their courage, simplicity and exceptionally good comradeship, where scientists take their share of the rough work along with the sailors. At first one is apt to think that the task for modern explorers is much easier than that which confronted their predecessors. It is amazing to see the big Catalina fly among the white, ice-covered mountains, and watch it landing at the open water of the Broenlund-Fiord about 130 km. inland. Here, in the heart of Pearyland, eight scientists worked, hoping the plane would be able to fetch them back when their work was finished. It had to be done before the winter began when ice would begin to drift into the fiord. But they had to reckon with the fact that they might be forced to walk back a distance of 800-900 km., no joke at those latitudes.

A small piece of unnoticed drifting ice is able to upset and destroy an aircraft, and this actually happened when the Catalina returned from Pearyland to the base. Fortunately it could be repaired, but some parts had to be sent for as far away as Copenhagen. Here modernity scored, for a plane flew up with the necessary parts, the flight only lasting twelve hours, whereas a ship takes at least 14 days.

The damage was quickly repaired and the little party in Pearyland rescued—in the nick of time.

The film gives a vivid impression of all these events, as well as the joy and satisfaction of the scientists at their very satisfactory results. The geologist, for example, discovered fossils 500 million years old.

This first Danish colour film from Greenland also shows the varied colouring of this far-off country, which is much greater than one generally supposes. There are many different animals and an astonishingly rich flora. How impressive this simple film is in comparison with many of the complicated big epics overcharged with so-called action. Very cleverly they have not tried to be "interesting" with complicated photographed angles and effects, which would have spoiled the feeling of greatness. One gets an immense respect for these brave and utterly unpretentious men—not least for the cameraman, always ready and aware of even the smallest event which might perhaps turn out to be important. For instance, the photography of the accident of the landing of the aircraft is highly dramatic and actually what would be called good cinema.

Ib Dam was director and cameraman, Thorkild Christensen wrote the script and V. Holmbo composed the music. The film was produced by Minerva, one of the best documentary companies in Denmark. It turns out about 30 films a year and has amongst others made the authentic resistance film *Your Freedom is at Stake*.

THE WORLD LIKES AMERICAN FILMS

States

WILLIAM ROBERTSON

AND THE FILM INTELLECTUALS don't. Mention Hollywood and get ready for a laugh, a sneer, a biased attitude. Mention a British film and get ready for pats on the back all round. The writer, who moves with the world in this case, would like to examine this position and try to give a fresh assessment of American films.

These thoughts were started by recent reactions to King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun*. First of all came the critics in their weekly columns, nearly all of which were full of scathing and witty (?) comments (one talked of tomato ketchup). Then "Picture Post" ran a double-page feature, billing the critics on one page and Jane Russell, scowling and clad in the notorious blanket, on the other: the critics looking like some intolerant puritan inquisition. And so on. The more the advertising ballyhoo the more the critics seem determined to damn a film. Why? Ask M.G.M., after conducting their case against E. Arnot Robertson. They might know. But when the picture is viewed and judged on its merits as a film, forgetting the ballyhoo, a rather different conclusion emerges. It may be hokum, but it is first-rate hokum. However, there is no need to defend the film here—the British public have flocked to see it and it has been a box-office success. And it deserves it, for among other things it is technically one of the best films yet made.

Yes, American films are box-office successes. This aspect of the case provides some interesting thoughts. Many of our intellectuals (for want of a better word) shrink away from a film that is "box-office"—they won't admit it, but they do. They tend to assume a rather superior air about films like *The Wicked Lady*, as they hie off to the Everyman to see *Citizen Kane* for the sixth time. Nobody is quarrelling with this latter being a great film, but there are people (the majority) to whom it would mean nothing. Let us educate the public then, cry the intellectuals—up to our level. But do they really think this can or ought to be done? The answer to the former is that it can't in our generation, and to the latter, I submit, no. Why should ordinary folk be priggishly levelled up? Surely the answer is to make films that are good of their type and suited to popular taste. A film can be popular and good—the two are not irreconcilable. The box-office has rather more value than some would have us think in providing an estimate of the worth of a film. Pictures like *The Magnificent Ambersons* (I deliberately quote American film for there must always be exceptions in discussions of this sort) should first be regarded as of limited appeal rather than masterpieces, because they are of limited appeal. Whether or not they are great can be settled later irrespective of their popularity. A very popular film,

on the other hand, can usually be regarded as being exceptionally good. Good, that is, by ordinary human standards, not the often queer ones of intellectuals. Film appreciation can look after itself as cinema-goers get more and more interested in film technique, and won't be helped by all the earnest young youth-leaders in this country talking about culture and *Citizen Kane*.

What are the salient characteristics that endear American movies to the world (and me)? Firstly, their vitality. There is something vital and gay in the American (and Canadian) people which comes over in so many of their films. Their great love of dancing, jiving, and outdoor sports of all kinds is proof of this. In a Europe that is tired and weary and in many parts unable or unwilling to help itself, this transatlantic vitality mirrored in the films offers some sort of dream-hope. Peace-weary citizens visit their cinemas and for a few hours are able to forget the taut and unhappy faces in the queues and assorted ill-tempered officials and sink into a dynamic world that is 100 per cent. living—where people, in fact, live life, not just endure it. Such films as *Centennial Summer*, *The Bells of Saint Mary's* and *The Late George Apley*, all possess this quality in a marked degree—a quality not often found elsewhere. And I think it is right that English people should be reminded of this vitality that was once theirs and the love of living that goes with it. Look for example at *Odd Man Out*. All that brilliant talent spent on a film that had hardly any warmth, vitality or love of living at all. A film that was the negation of life, and was merely horror heaped on pity and pity piled on pathos. Beautifully done, of course; art for art's sake—but was it a healthy sign?

Secondly, their sentiment. Sentimentality is a special characteristic of Americans and is quite different from similar qualities in the English, French and Russian. Many critics are put off by this more than anything else—a Hollywood film which has a high sentimental content is too much for their critical faculties and they are incapable of assessing the picture on its real merits. Whilst this is understandable it is rather regrettable, since this aspect of their films seems to go down well with the Englishman-in-the-queue. Perhaps this is because he would subconsciously like to let himself go in the emotional sense in real life, but is kept down by so many years of grooming in the understatement school. Be that as it may, he (and she) undoubtedly like this quality of American films. Especially as it is genuine, and not, as the highbrows would say, hokum. The recent visits of so many American servicemen should have convinced even the most hardbitten that this sentimentality is a very genuine trait. It is, perhaps, best instanced in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. This film is so typically American that it would be a good test to make a prospective emigrant there sit through it. If he failed to enjoy it he would be a complete transatlantic social misfit. Capra proclaims his message (yes, a film with a message!) that life is always worth living and his film is extraordinarily moving in parts—and yet some critics geyed this film. It would be so much better all round if these critics would leave the national traits to look after themselves and to devote their columns to film criticism and not national criticism. This Capra film may be a bad picture (in many ways I think it is) but it is not bad because

it is sentimental or because it is American. That is the danger to guard against with the highbrow critic, and to a lesser extent with the others.

Thirdly, let us turn to some more minor characteristics and types of American films. **TECHNIQUE**—well, that is still where they score, but no longer much more than (say) British pictures. They are slick and fast-moving, and in this respect rather superior to other countries' films—if being slick is a good thing. Compared with films like *Easy to Wed*, a film such as *L'homme qui cherche la verite* seems very tedious, slow and poor in direction (though not, of course, in acting) when the American comedy has been seen the night before. **MUSICALS**—these the Americans do better than any other country. Films like *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Blue Skies*, *Carnival in Costa Rica*, to take a few at random, offer incomparably better entertainment than the British equivalent like *Flight from Folly* or *London Town*. **WESTERNS**—an "indisputed field of American endeavour". A partiality of the super-western can be noted, whether moral like *Strange Incident* or *My Darling Clementine*, or amoral (immoral some would say) like *Duel in the Sun*. But still real contributions to the art of the cinema. **ANIMAL FILMS**—here we get a form of sentimentality that is universally appealing, and films like *Wild Beauty* with their simple but excellent morality are deservedly popular. **SATIRES**—again Hollywood scores with such films as *Cluny Brown*, *The Late George Apley* and *Hail the Conquering Hero*. American directors are fascinating to watch when they get away with films like the latter! With *Cluny Brown* it was easy as it was a foreign country (England) that was being satirised so wickedly (Roger Manvell notes an immoral tendency in this film where the refugee Prof. Belinski—Chas. Boyer—is made such a scrounging upper-class spiv. He is probably right but the film remains an effective satire). The Mankiewicz film was wholly delightful—one at which even the sneerers were silent—and was as typical of America as drug-stores. **FILMS WITH A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE**—like *Scarlet Street*, *Grapes of Wrath* and *Fury* get made. This should be remembered by all. They get made. It would be idle to claim American superiority here—but, nevertheless, their output has been significant. Films with a message are out of fashion, cf. the failure of *They Came to a City* with the intellectuals (the general public never had a real chance to see it). It was not cinematic, they said. Perhaps it wasn't (points of this sort can't be argued), but it was thundering good dialectics and as such was a first-rate film. Sociology is sometimes more important than aesthetics to people in 1947 faced with problems of living outside ivory castles.

The above is in no way intended to glorify American films at the expense of those of other countries. But it is felt that much of contemporary criticism (particularly highbrow), is persistently unfair to American films and that it is time that this stopped. Never before was it so imperative that nations should understand and tolerate one another—and this is just as important in the critical field as elsewhere. Isn't it up to the film critics to set their example, too?

Cartoon

MAGIC CANVAS

By

OSWELL BLAKESTON



AN ARTIST WHO SETS HIMSELF the problem of creating a cartoon film, begins with a sheet of paper as blank as the raw stock of ciné film. There are no performers, no stars whose living personalities can be taken as part of the story; there are no existing places or palaces-on-location which can charm the eye before the story-theme begins. The cartoon worker, then, is probably the nearest to basic fact in cinema—the blank paper and the artist, the raw stock and the film.

Many of the experimental films, made in days when such pleasures were economically feasible, were based on single-stop-motion work: the camera exposed one frame of film at a time, and abstract patterns grew or objects danced by themselves in a play of light. The experimenters chose single-stop-motion technique because it enabled them to give thought to each frame of film—they did not want to blur conception in movement they could not control. Film cartoonists, of course, also work with the stop-motion camera and can plan the absolute detail of each frame.

Unfortunately, the emphasis in film cartoons has not, up to the present, been on the cartoon as a medium of idea-in-action; rather has it been to transpose music-hall tricks to celluloid. There have been exceptions—*The Fox Hunt*, *Tusalava*, *Night On The Bare Mountain*, etc.; but most of the experimenters have been driven, by economic circumstance, to retreat into commercial films made for propaganda or advertising purposes. Yet, to-day, the development of cartoon technique offers to artists even greater opportunities for visual and mental exercise and fulfilment.

It is more than encouraging, therefore, to find that one unsponsored cartoon—something conceived with the sole object of using æsthetic possibilities of film cartoon work—is being made in London. The man who is making this picture is John Halas, who has already produced a number of commercial cartoons in England, and who, previously, was associated with George Pal in Budapest. I have seen the scenario and the animation tests of this picture which Mr. Halas is making, with great courage, to please himself; probably by the time this note appears, the film may be complete. When it is shown, I feel certain that people who love the film as art will appreciate Mr. Halas's idealism

and achievement. I hope they will be ready to support what could be the beginning of a new chapter in film cartoon history.

Mr. Halas, who has studied painting in Paris, chose for his scenario something which would give him the maximum chance to approach, in composition and colour, the world of modern painting, and something which also would reveal existing possibilities of the medium. Naturally, in the world of ideas there is an almost terrifying unlimited choice of subjects, all of which the cartoon medium, free as it is from the factual and organisational difficulties of features, can interpret.

The *Magic Canvas* opens with the blank canvas of the painter. An eye is painted on the canvas and then the eye opens. The camera tracks into a glint of light in the eye, a speck which turns into an amoeba—the birth of an idea in the painter's mind. The amoeba wriggles and spins, elongates and takes form. Then there are two forms, two forms in conflict; for the idea contains its own contradiction and one might say that one form represents the conscious and one the unconscious element in the idea. There are bars now across the screen—while the idea is unresolved, the painter cannot work. Then the conscious element takes the shape of a bird. It flies into space and is battered by a storm; for the idea must go through its own life and endurances before it can be accepted by the painter. The bird falls beneath the rain; but the sun, the will of the artist, breaks through the clouds. The bird revives and goes to meet the sun, and the flowers, and all the gifts of sunlight. Now the idea shows a life of its own in a wilful mood of play. It darts over the waters, creating water shapes. It gains strength and courage. It asserts and affirms, till the clouds become little lambs to lie down with the lion of thought. Then the bird shape returns to the other element of the idea, reunites with it and flies with it in spiritual embrace. The film ends with the canvas and the eye closing.

One may hope that *Magic Canvas* will encourage other artists to turn to the screen. How grateful many artists of the past would have been for the invitation. Delacroix, with his interest in animal movement; Cezanne, whose geometrical analysis of a glass is almost an animation guide—surely the great would have been enthralled by dynamic drawing? Yet it may take time for contemporary artists to realise the scope of the medium which is being offered them. The process of drawing twenty-four pictures to attain one second of screen-time is still a strange one. It took a hundred years to make it possible for artists to use the medium of oils and forget the difficulties which had been overcome to make easy acceptance of the medium possible. Mr. Halas's picture, though, should be seen by every artist; and if film enthusiasts support Mr. Halas, many things may yet be possible.

CRISIS OVER FRANCE

By

GEORGES SADOUL

FROM THE ARTISTIC point of view, 1947 was an exceptionally brilliant year for the French cinema. From Brussels to Locarno, from Venice to Cannes, Grands Prix fell to the share of our different producers and main interpreters. *Le Silence est d'or* by René Clair, *Farrebique*, the documentary by Georges Rouquier *Le Diable au Corps* by Claude Autant-Lara, *Quai des Orfèvres* by Clouzot, *Antoine et Antoinette* by Jacques Becker are all first-class masterpieces and their importance cannot be denied. Already, in connection with this recent drop of laurels, certain critics abroad were able to speak of the fresh impetus of the French film, on a par with that which, after 1935, produced one after the other the masterpieces of Feyder, Duvivier, Jean Renoir and Marcel Carné.

Those Frenchmen who may have allowed themselves to be carried away by these too flattering words found their illusions had vanished as soon as the festivals were over and they had returned to Paris. The situation was quite different from that in previous years. For instance in 1945/46 all makers of films and all producers were complaining of the small number of studios in existence in France compared with the size of the industry. To undertake a film, it was necessary to queue up and wait for months until a Paris set was free. At the time of the first Cannes Festival, everybody in France was begging the film administration to build as soon as possible on the Côte d'Azur some kind of French Hollywood, whose installation would vie with those of Pinewood and Denham put together.

Just now, on the other hand, there are too many French studios. On several occasions we have learned that certain of them, as soon as the last part of a film had been shot, had to put up the shutters owing to lack of work, and dismiss the whole staff. For example the large cinema city built up round the studios erected some forty years ago by Léon Gaumont in the region of Buttes-Chaumont has just closed its doors for good.

The position with regard to the French cinema is at present to some extent paradoxical. High artistic quality, outstanding international success, yes, but at the same time an almost 100 per cent. economic deadlock. The situation is rather reminiscent of that in about 1923-24 as it affected the Swedish film industry, the age of Sjöström and Stiller. We can only hope that as a result of this crisis, the French film will not share the lot of the Swedish film, which then practically vanished from international screens for twenty years.

It must moreover be admitted that the artistic rise of the French film runs the risk of being held up just now. Recent statistics give the cost price of films in production. In France it is almost impossible to make a high class film below 25 million francs, and the number of concerns having such a sum available has decreased perilously during 1947. Through lack of funds, there are reasons for

fearing that the whole of one section of the French cinema industry may be overwhelmed by mediocrity.

What are the causes of the present crisis in the French film industry? A distinction may be made between certain deep-seated causes and a recent cause. Let us first of all consider the structural defects of the French cinema industry.

The French language is far less widespread in the world than English, Russian, Spanish or Arabic. Fewer than 60,000,000 persons speak French and moreover, while English talkies by recourse to dubbing have fairly large audiences in countries of Latin speech, the same does not hold good for French films in the Anglo-Saxon countries. What is more, the fact that France is still a nation where half the population lives in the country, condemns our land to be content with a comparatively small number of picture theatres and seats. Finally, the rather low standard of living of the whole or part of the population forces cinema proprietors to keep the price of seats down, failing which there may be empty auditoriums.

According to statistics compiled for 1946, France and Great Britain, whose populations and numbers of picture theatres are more or less the same, were very differently placed from the point of view of the film industry. There are 5,000,000 seats in Britain, but only 2,000,000 in France; there are 1,300,000,000 spectators every year in Great Britain, but only 300,000,000 over here. And as the average price of seats is considerably higher in Great Britain than in France, British takings for the cinema industry as a whole are almost 10 times as much as French takings (57 milliards of francs compared with six milliards in 1946).

This particularly unfavourable situation for French producers is the reason why the French film has a relatively low cost price when converted into sterling. In France it was considered extravagant to make a film such as *Les Portes de la Nuit*, whose cost price exceeded a hundred million. It was a piece of prodigality comparable with the million pounds sterling spent on *Cæsar and Cleopatra*.

The French cinema industry, whose capital is small, using studios whose equipment is practically outmoded and devices of an antiquated nature, has nevertheless been able to achieve some fine films in recent years, thanks to the high degree of qualification on the part of technicians and studio workers. However, a cinema industry burdened by such unfavourable conditions, in order to survive, needed effective customs protection. Between 1936 and 1946, the French film was protected by the so-called quota system. The importation of feature films from any country was restricted to 188 per year, at a time when the double programme was the rule in France. This corresponds for a period where the single programme has become a legal requirement, to the importation of 94 foreign films

per annum. Here we come to the chief cause of the present film crisis, the agreements signed at Washington in June, 1946, between the General Secretary of the State Department, Byrnes, and the Ambassador-Extraordinary, Léon Blum, which did away with the old system and replaced it by a screen quota, imitated in principle from the British quota. However, while in Great Britain the quota fixed was always slightly greater than the actual production capacity of the industry, quite the contrary was stipulated by the Washington agreements. Whereas for over 10 years, French screens had shown French films in a proportion exceeding 50 per cent., about 75 per cent. of the takings benefiting the national industry in 1938, the Washington agreements fixed a legal quota of 31 per cent. (4 weeks out of 13), very much less than the actual quota applied in the picture theatres.

After the lapse of two years, the results of the agreements are to-day clearly apparent. The proportion of French films shown in French picture theatres has dropped to 38 per cent., while American films receive over half the takings falling to the producer's share. The share of French producers is thus considerably reduced and the situation is a serious one. Indeed, it was estimated in 1947 that the average remunerativeness of a film on French territory was just about 23 million francs, whereas, as we have said, the figure of 25 to 30 million francs must be allowed for making a high grade film. To mention further figures affecting the 1947 financial year, statistics estimate that during that year French production cost two milliards and 400 thousand francs. In exchange, it only received, for exploitation on a reduced or standard scale, in Paris, the provinces and North Africa, and from the amounts accruing from the showing of these films, the sum of one million 800 thousand francs approximately. The deficit in French production thus amounted in 1947 to 600,000,000 francs, while 1,400,000 francs were expended on purchases of foreign films, more than 90 per cent. of that sum going to Hollywood.

Another great problem for France is that of "dubbed" films. A foreign film that has been dubbed into French only calls for small capital outlay, the production generally having been written off in the country of origin. It may, therefore, be hoped, in the case of a work involving stars or based on some famous theme, especially if it is a coloured film, to obtain takings equal to the average French takings, viz., 23,000,000 francs. Now the cost of dubbing a film seldom exceeds 3,000,000. A foreign film dubber in France may therefore be assured of a profit attaining roughly 20,000,000, whereas a producer investing a sum at least ten times as great may fear a deficit exceeding 5,000,000. To restore balance between French productions and dubbed films, a dubbing tax appears to have been considered in certain parliamentary or government circles, which moreover feel that the proceeds of this dubbing tax might be employed to encourage the national industry in all its branches, in particular production and distribution.

Supposing that the French Government should, in the near future, adopt as regards film imports an attitude comparable with that of the British Government and Parliament, it would remain to find a solution for the deep-seated causes of the weakness of the French cinema industry. French production is at present split up into a very large number of small companies. There were 240 producers in existence in 1947, while only 72 French films were turned out, which means on the one hand that the

majority of these firms produced practically no films in the last year and on the other hand, that most of them have been content to produce a single film or even a fraction of a film in collaboration with another firm. In 1947, only three producers completed over four films and not one producer was responsible for more than seven. This splitting up of French production has advantages which were very rightly commented on by Roger Manvell in the first edition of his book "FILM": "Fortunately the collapse of some of the major commercial studios in 1935 gave the independent producer-directors a chance to make films which, despite the fewness of their number, were to create the famous French school of poetic-realistic films and to make the reputation of the French cinema in Britain and America".

It is indeed true that the existence of a number of independent producers has, since 1935, favoured the rebirth of the French cinema through the production of works having a high artistic value which are greatly admired by foreign, particularly Anglo-Saxon audiences. In view of the highly individualistic French temperament, the recrudescence of the former large industrial combines, which make it difficult for personalities to develop fully, is not a thing to be desired. However, it is not impossible to conceive that the State which, through the confiscation of German property in France, finds itself in possession of considerable distributing, producing and exploiting firms, will aid, by means of this industrial and commercial machinery, the independent producers and impresarios. This comes within the scope of the "Centre National du Cinéma", which is a kind of Film Ministry, and certain steps have already been taken in this direction.

In any case, it is to be hoped that this crisis will not continue for very much longer, for already a number of impresarios, actors and technicians have been without work for many months. In like manner it is to be hoped that a normal system of international exchanges will enable the principal directors to control films on an exchange basis in different countries, for it would be deplorable if there were to be a mass exodus of French technicians towards the principal cinema centres abroad. This scattering of strength, whose union has stood the test in France would be to the detriment of the international cinema as a whole. It is already possible to discern a few signs of this exodus and some of our leading directors have agreed to make films in Italy, for instance. It is still only a question of temporary absences, but permanent absences would be regrettable.

These are not the first vicissitudes of the French film. To recall the more recent of these, at the beginning of the occupation, the absence of René Clair, Jean Renoir, Jacques Feyder, Julien Duvivier gave grounds for fearing that the French cinema industry, thus decapitated, might continue to produce no works of value. However, in spite of the presence of the Germans and the restrictions imposed thereby, the French cinema has nevertheless been able to maintain itself on an honourable level during the period of the occupation. This was very largely due to the fact, however, that a high proportion of the screens was set aside for it, as the public systematically and instinctively boycotted the mediocre films sent from Germany.

Let us hope that the French cinema, which has been able to survive for 50 years in spite of the great difficulties it has encountered during its history, will also surmount the present grave crisis.

DECLINE AND FALL OF COMEDY

By

JOHN H. WINGE

THE CRAFTSMEN of Hollywood humour use different technical terms for different kinds of laughter as supposedly manufactured by comedy: a mild ripple of laughter is just a "guffaw", but a real storm is a "boff", and there is nothing more longed for in the trade.

But where, ask boff-starved crowds—where are the guffaws at least—where are the dear boffs themselves?

No doubt Hollywood has been making comedies all the time and they have been advertised to be rip-roaring at the least. No doubt there will be always odd characters ground that might be trusted to laugh about Lou Costello falling on his rear or Red Skelton speaking toothlessly. After all, humour, like beauty, is much a question of taste. It seems that the general deterioration of Hollywood pictures has afflicted form-bound comedy even more than mush-bound draama—regardless of one's personal sense of humour.

Which names are signifying today's comedy productions? Abbott and Costello, Red Skelton, Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, a crooner, as comedians—and Frank Capra and the intermittent Preston Sturges as authors and directors. The even more intermittent Chaplin is a chilly-high pinnacle all by himself, ageless and aloof.

No fooling—what is the comedy as presented by these gentlemen? Abbott and Costello are straight man and clown doing old-fashioned burlesque routines as still executed between strip-teases in the burly-houses. There they serve well to cool-off the gentlemen yet heated-up by the strippers' gyrations. The cinema unfortunately has been stripped of strippers and thus resorts to the bare acts of the left-over comics. This brand of humour is elementary and doesn't have to be ashamed of its kinship with circus clownery. Into this animalistic relation between clever Abbott and dumb Costello enter problems hardly dreamed of by these comedians and their producers. They, too, feel that something is wrong with their "formula", but they remain feeling and don't advance toward knowing—Hollywood's old ailment. Further, I shall quote a distinguished authority, Mr. Buster Keaton, who might shed quite a bit of light on a pitch-dark situation.

Red Skelton, a fine and upright radio comedian, has been deep-frozen into a babbling frenzy. Some over-strict overseer doesn't let him do any sort of acting. A so-called specialist for comedy, a Mr. Sylvan S. Simon, has directed most of Skelton's pictures and watched over him at M-G-M as well as at Columbia. His heavy hand chokes comedy in the bud. These Skelton pictures have been stern fare. Well-trained, alert observers might have noticed certain pantomimicabilities of Skelton's whose short-lived manifestations had somehow escaped the cutter's vigilance. So Skelton's future is not quite as triste as his pictures, provided he will run into a producer who will liberate him from his "formula".

Hope is widely known as a fast gagger and quipper and

who could deny that the telling of jokes is an art in itself—like the handmaking of a pair of shoes, for instance, or the performance of an appendectomy. Away from the radio microphone Hope has to offer a bent nose and a swaying walk. But in his funny dialogues with Crosby in the Road pictures Hope's writers show a healthy tendency toward a break through the holy "fourth wall" of the theatre here represented by the camera. They let them address the audience directly and generally in the midst of pleasant nonsense reality is acknowledged as violently as not even in Rochemont's semi-documentary shockers. Here is a mild breeze from the cabaret and its topical satire. Since the United States have no cabaret but more taboos than the whole South Sea, I'm afraid Hope and Crosby will remain pathetically stationary on their Road.

These are all the comedians, with the Marx Brothers out of work, Buster Keaton writing gags for Skelton, Raymond Griffith retired, Harold Lloyd enjoying lawsuits against former associates, Al St. John knocking out quick Westerns, Chaplin brooding inaccessibly. And Roscoe Arbuckle and Lloyd Hamilton and Mabel Normand are dead.

But there are two picture-makers: Capra and Sturges. Capra's newest is *State of the Union* with dialogue so fast that one has to be as proud of it as Capra to enjoy it. It is certainly faster than funny.

And Sturges' attempt to bring Harold Lloyd back—*Mad Wednesday*—has never been released. He still is the most original maker of film comedies since Mack Sennett and by far the greater artist and the more subtle humorist. Even his weaker pictures tower high above the most diligent "laugh-riots" of the Hollywood mills. But Sturges is almost as much "out of production" as Chaplin.

What goes for comedy today are feeble fantasies like *The Bishop's Wife* or high-salaried cocktail-stuff like *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*. Gregory La Cava, whose comedies were once zany enough to be a delightful kind of satire, has directed *Life's For The Loving* in 1947 and it was such a flop that he hasn't had a job ever since. Like the masters of the old days, he shot "off the cuff"—without script and what was left when he checked out of the studio was such a mess that it had to be patched, filled up and doctored to be released at all. And you know how even a beautiful girl looks after she has been doctored.

All this makes film comedy a pretty grave affair with just hopes for some Chaplin or Sturges or perhaps Morgan to come. Hopes don't make laughs—not to mention boffs.

So I asked Mack Sennett about this situation. This youngish lad with grey hair turned out to be still an optimist. "If you can combine pantomime and talk you have great pictures," he exclaimed. "Chaplin, of course, is the greatest of all comedians. He's like Caruso in voice. I think W. C. Fields is next as a funny man. He was better in talking pictures than in silent pictures because of his

voice. Yes, his voice was terrific. The eye is more important than the ear, though. It's faster. But at the same time the lines are very important. Do you know what put the two-reel comedy off the screen? The double feature. How? The people who patronize movies would have dinner about 5.30 or 6 o'clock, then go to the show which was over at 9. They didn't want to go home so early and that's how the double features came into being. And the two-reeler was out of films. It would cost about \$50,000 and you couldn't afford to use the actors that are being used today. But I have thirty two-reelers to be re-issued in England. Some new people think they can just step out and do a few raw situations and that's all. But you have to have a reason. Call it an effect. It must be present. You must have motivation and that's what they don't seem to understand. You must be more careful with comedy than with a dramatic movie scene. Repetition is deadly in comedy. But the art of slapstick is gone. Someone might bring it back. Maybe I will myself". And he hinted at a screenplay he was just finishing and he hoped he could direct in the near future—provided he can find comedians "who are really funny from inside".

Buster Keaton went right to town when asked about the problem of the disappearing film comedy. "There is no market for shorts anymore", he said, and his expressive face was not dead-pan at all. "They'd cost \$20,000 at the very least and who's going to pay for it? But here is an even greater problem: where are the young actors trained in playing comedy? They can hold a cocktail glass all right or slouch on a couch but can they be funny? They never had a chance to learn anything. In the old days they learned as they went. And now?

"Modern comedy would be pantomime plus dialogue but one ought to know very well when and where to use either one. The movie makers are still much too drunk with the coming of sound to be large enough to give it up once in a while, and so many a good comedy situation has been killed by words. You know where they still know how to do a pantomime and a very modern sort at that? In Europe but not over here. I plan to go there—to England or to Italy and make a feature picture there. I'll write and direct it and play a fat part. Circus on the road with plenty of acts—all funny. I just did two pictures in Mexico City with me just saying a few lines in Spanish, and last Winter I did a short picture in Paris based on my old duel act. Very funny too, they say. But this circus picture I'd like to do completely as pantomime—just sound effects and music on the sound track. I have a trunkful of funny gags for it". And he told me some that were boffs.

Costello's dilemma became clear and with it that of Hollywood's dying laughter. As long as these pictures move the pictorial element will be primary and sound—including dialogue—secondary. Yes, sound is moving too, but remember Sennett's lines about the quicker eye. Definitely our eyes are far better educated than our ears and thus better tools capable of perceiving finer shadings. The *situation* is still winding up in silent reaction of the characters—on stage as well as on the screen. But the camera can inquire in situation details barred from the bodily remote audience of the legitimate theatre. This permits a humour of miniatures well-related to human experience and exclusive to literary narration and to film comedy. The closer the climax approaches the fewer the words become. A comedy with a style of its own carries words sparingly on its structure of silent expression. And this is not just tearful nostalgia for the good old days, either. Thanks, Mr. Keaton.

"SYNTHETIC STARS"

A reply from

OSWELL BLAKESTON

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR—I am, of course, very sorry that Mr. Summers had such an unhappy time with my article on "Synthetic Stars"; but I don't accept full responsibility as I can't help feeling that his own reactions to the possibilities I suggested coloured his interpretation of the statements I made.

Yes, if he splits one of my sentences, it does make for confusion; but read as a sentence in its context, it is, surely, perfectly clear. The fact that there is, in so many Hollywood films, a time-lag between performance and recording of dialogue, and the fact that this time-lag has passed unnoticed by the critics, makes nonsense of the assertion that only direct recording can carry conviction. This is the meaning of my sentence—in its context. But obviously Mr. Summers has not followed my argument, which is based on the assertion that critics have not spotted the extensive use of post-synching in American pictures. For Mr. Summers says I do not mention whether I think it a good or bad thing that Hollywood has adopted this practice. Surely I do in so far as I point out that it has passed unnoticed? And if Mr. Summers doesn't believe in the economy of the method, I would ask him to compare schedules of good Hollywood pictures with the shooting time taken in our studio. Let him, too, compare the budgets.

Again Mr. Summers warns me that if synthetic stars came into being, a voice might appear attached to different artistes in two films on the same programme. But I wrote: "... the synthetic star should be as much a unit for audiences of one language-speaking group as a real star". This statement is a key one in my argument, but Mr. Summers appears to have skipped it. My own belief in the importance of personality lead me to suggest that the possibilities of emergent personalities—"the planned synthesis, the conscious creation of personality"—should at least be explored.

In all, I would suggest that the "harm" which can be done by articles like mine on synthetic stars comes through readers not troubling to read the article.

I was well aware that my thesis is controversial, just as I know that certain directors will be driven to frenzy by the thought of independent frame innovations. Personally, I find such matters stimulating, as I believe all progress of the film is inevitably related to the progress of the machines which make them, and I believe it is through the development of machines that the artist can be freed—the script-writer liberated through independent frame, for instance. Yet I can understand the position of those who do not agree with me. I am perfectly prepared to admit that Mr. Summers may be right and I may be wrong; but I do wish . . . I do wish he would read my articles before flying at them with the robust emotional enthusiasm of the director of Bulldog Drummond. He might then notice that he attributes to me somebody else's name.

Yours faithfully,

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

ON FILM CRITICS

By

D. A. YERRILL

"It is part of the business of the critic to preserve tradition—where a good tradition exists."—T. S. ELIOT.

IS THERE A TRADITION in the cinema? If there is, is it a good one or a bad one? And what are the critics doing about it?

If one were not going to confine one's remarks to the cinema, it would be amusing to demonstrate how rare a good tradition is. Since we are serious-minded about the cinema, and do not agree with J. B. Priestley on the subject, we do not find this rarity amusing; nor do we take kindly to remarks, however plausible, about the youth and the irresponsibility of the art form that occupies so much of our interest. There have been good traditions, or the beginnings of them, in the cinema which, among the overwhelming mass of bad, and too dull or too futile to be bad traditions, shine like a new tanner in a sweep's ear; and which, if nurtured to a proper and fitting maturity might have made the cinema appear in a form both old and wise so far from its present one of ingrown adolescence.

If the critics were widely read, and by-and-large they are not, it would be fair to say that they have never recognised that part of their business which should lead them to preserve the rare and fleeting good traditions of the cinema and that by this failure they have let the side down. That they have not recognised this duty, and that they have not, conversely, destroyed tradition where bad tradition has existed, is demonstrable. It is true the critics *are* read by that section of the public which "shops" for its films and which is more essential to the life of the film as an art form than that which buys a cinema seat much as it buys a tin of Ministry of Food salmon (for want of anything better). The former section of the film-going public is that which would be heard demanding films in a good tradition if someone were to tell them what such a tradition is, and where such films are to be found on the rare occasions of their appearance. This is part of the critic's job. And to do this part of his job the critic needs a reliable set of standards—a yardstick. And where will he find that? Obviously the intelligent critic and the one who is aware of his duty to society will find it in the films he sees. It is possible to find this yardstick, though, to be fair to critics, their job is not made easier by the consistently low standard of films produced.

* * * *

The newspaper critic is a journalist as well as a critic. He knows his public and he writes to that public in a language it understands. So that when a man writes, "It is not a masterpiece but masterpieces can be very dull on an evening off", we know that he is writing to an audience which he, benevolent, patronising journalist that he is, knows to believe that "masterpiece" is synonymous with "undesirable"; and we may forgive him. We may be less willing or able to forgive this: "The country, it seems, is shocked to the very drums of what an eminent contemporary has called its civilised ears by the 'liberties'

taken with the text. Young Fortinbras, though one would never have suspected it, is everybody's darling; not a home in England but insists on his restitution, together with the political complications of the most complicated play ever written". There are four long paragraphs in this strain, with phrases like "sensitive public", "epidemic of scholarship", and "display of sensibility" all couched in a foetid morass of mock-surprise, snobbery, condescension, patronage, and esoteric chuckles aside. Sensibility in the masses? says this critic; literacy in the middle classes? and gathering the cloak of her Culture around her shoulders she makes off to the Women's Press Club crying, "Is nothing sacred"? One wonders if newsprint is so scarce after all if this sort of childish display can occupy half a column.

Of 2,000 people of all classes and age-groups interviewed by The British Market Research Bureau, only 9 per cent. admitted to being influenced by the critics in their choice of films. Probably up to 15 per cent. *are* so influenced, and perhaps up to 30 or 40 per cent. actually read reviews in the newspapers. The influence of the critics is not, therefore, great; but the danger is nevertheless a real one—just as, conversely, the value could be real. There is more to criticising films than filling up a column with quotations from French philosophers, exhibitionist pseudo-profundities and wisecracks; or sympathetic paragraphs in the strain of "We know you hate 'em when they're good". Lots more.

The critics, if they are to do the film, the art form of our age, any good, will have to start by being honest, both with themselves and with the public which they address. If they think a film is good, or in a good tradition, it would be a good thing if they said so. A better thing than trying to be a Dorothy Parker on the one hand or a sea-lawyer on the other. It would be a good thing, too, if they said "why". But in order to do this they will need standards, standards of what is meant by "good" in relation to films and film tradition, no easy matter when 99 per cent. of the films offered are bad rehashes and repetitions of indifferent "originals". The blame for making bad films does not lie at the critics' door, *but the blame for the repetition of bad films largely does*, because the critics influence the public which is sufficiently interested to try to discriminate.

James Agate used to be able to pick a winner now and then, and when he did he was often sufficiently fair-minded to point it out and give it the boost it deserved. More often, however, he displayed the fault so prevalent among the lesser lights of his calling—he wrote about the film that gave him material for journalistic virtuosity at the expense of the one which could have usefully received recognition from him. It is not often that a film that is undoubtedly good is passed over in reviews; but it often happens that a film which has good points, has a claim to be a forerunner of a great tradition, is overlooked. And, more frequently still, it happens that a film which appeals to a critic's special

likes or fancies (often one which has the leading players of one which he saw 10 years back, or one based on a favourite book) is stressed out of all proportion to its true value. This sort of bias may be human; but the critic, like the artist himself, is required to be just a little superhuman.

* * * *

Now all this points to the distressing thought that perhaps the critics, like the mass of the more discerning public, are not taking the cinema as seriously as other critics take other art forms. Add a lack of sincerity on the part of critics to a "politics first" or "hard cash first" attitude on the part of producers and we have a pretty fair mess. Neither those who might be expected to start a good film tradition, nor those who might nurture it once begun, are playing the thing quite straight. The result is Priestley's crack: "Films are back where they were before 'talkies'".

This is not true; but there is an element of truth, an element of truth sufficient to shake us. The fact is that there have been men in films, pioneers, hard workers, yes, and idealists, who have pushed out boats called "The Endeavour" and shown us what could be. Good traditions have been floated. Most of them have drifted back to port for lack of wind in their sails. The wind to keep them going should have come from the critics—in Sheridan's day it was called "Puff"—and we could do with some good, strong puff right now in the review columns of the press instead of elegant journalism, deliberate nonsense and peacock feathers.

There have been great film traditions, ones that looked like going on and establishing themselves strongly. When they died, it was said that this was the nature of the thing, that films were ephemeral, that there could never be a film

tradition because . . . but you heard them. And they were so wrong.

The tax on American films did a little good in a strange way. We had another look at some of the old ones; and it taught us, or should have taught us, a good deal. It gave us an idea of progress; we could say that we had moved from there to here. It reminded us of the odd abortive expeditions which contained the germs of good film tradition. And it also reminded us that the underlying, the great moving central column of tradition in the cinema in Britain and America was totally rotten from the inside, was bad, thoroughly bad all through. We do not deny it; and the critics mildly deplore it or sit and sneer.

"They order this matter better in France". Over there, they really go to town with criticism and every kind of film news. The result is that the French public are really film conscious and acutely aware of their own country's efforts. One hesitates to advocate a bringing about of the French attitude, which can be a bit of a bore, over here; but it would be useful to take a small step in that direction. There have been embryonic good traditions in the cinema which, given a chance and a boost by the critics, might have been weaned and might have even matured. Instead these semi-traditions have been suffered to die out in favour of what the producers, for reasons of their own, feel sure the public wants. If a bad film tradition lines their pockets, or is an apparently good move on what is probably an imaginary international chess board, they will go making films in that tradition. It is more profitable to give the public what it wants than what is good. It is up to the critics to prove that the producers' arithmetic and diplomacy are both bad and that what is good in fact coincides with what is liked and what is wanted.

BRITISH FILMS OF THE QUARTER

By

ARTHUR VESSELO

THE TWO BIG SENSATIONS of the past quarter have been *Hamlet* and *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*.

Greatly different though these are from one another, neither in fact represent a genuinely new departure in the history of the British cinema. *Hamlet* stands, as it were, for culture—the culture after which film-makers have hankered since the earliest years, and whose promptings brought Shakespeare's "Richard III" to the screen in about 1911. *Miss Blandish* on the other hand is the latter-day offspring of those unhealthy peepshows that were once commonly met with in funfairs. Both films go into their respective matters much more thoroughly than did their primitive forerunners.

While the trials of *Miss Blandish* are a subject primarily for the sociologist and the psychiatrist, Olivier's *Hamlet* calls for the fullest critical consideration. It is elaborate, skilful and, in patches, excellent; but it is also in patches tedious, and its methods raise the whole question of how best Shakespeare can be translated into film terms, if the thing is to be done at all. There are only two basic approaches in the adaptation of a stage-play to the screen:

the one is to concentrate above all on the *film* and to chop and change, to add and subtract, as the nature of the film medium demands; the other is to concentrate first and foremost on faithfulness to the original, and to let accepted film methods go hang wherever they interfere with this aim. In the case of Shakespeare, there is no doubt whatever which course must be followed, if only because of the outcry which a film-maker would have to face if he dared to tamper to any extent with a Shakespeare play (as witness the arguments even over the excisions, made obviously with the greatest care, that were necessary to bring "Hamlet" down to a possible screen running-time); but it seems that Olivier has still thought that he might be able, by some ingenious tricks of technique, to get the best of both worlds.

This is presumably the explanation of the long and tiring moving shots through the castle of Elsinore; of the exaggerations of physical action, here and there, where attention should on the contrary be focused almost entirely on the words; of the unsuccessful fantastications over the ghost; of the superfluous passages of visual illustration,

showing the death of Hamlet's father, Hamlet fighting the pirates, Ophelia floating down the stream, and so forth; and of a variety of other pieces of business and of background stylization which, with the best of intentions, do not come off.

The treatment of the soliloquies is in its own way characteristic: Olivier has had the idea of converting them to a naturalistic mode by having them delivered as "spoken thought" while the actor puckers his brow but does not move his lips. This is most effectively done up to a point, but whether it could have been continued throughout must remain uncertain, for it is interrupted after a while by straight soliloquy, and the alternation of methods from then on destroys both consistency and illusion. The whole thing is over-conscious, like so much else, and one feels that straight soliloquy right through would have been a vast improvement.

Acting and delivery are often first-class and there are particular passages—such as the announcement to Hamlet of the ghost's nightly visitations and the first half of the closet scene—whose handling is brilliant; but nearly always the high-lights occur where Olivier has been content to produce the play and direct the characters without over-anxious devotion to the assumed needs of the screen, and where the camera, while doing a business-like job of work, has not been allowed to obtrude itself. The one exceptional point where Shakespeare really leaves room for spectacular by-play on a major scale is, of course, the duel scene, and full advantage has been taken of it.

There is a place for filmed versions of Shakespeare plays, and perhaps an important one. But the importance lies in the power of the screen to transmit Shakespeare to a wide audience, not in the power of Shakespeare's producers to embellish the film medium. Publicity-claims that *Hamlet* has evolved new screen techniques are dangerously misleading; and dangerously misleading also is the emergence of a Shakespeare film as the big prestige-picture of the year. One over-enthusiastic reviewer has already gone so far as to demand, as a result, that from now on British film-makers should do nothing else but adapt works by Shakespeare, Dickens, and other literary masters. This is to put the cinema on the wrong road entirely and no more excuse than this is needed for taking a highly critical attitude towards the defects of Olivier's *Hamlet* while not ignoring its many admirable qualities.

Outside *Hamlet*, there is depressingly little in the quarter's array which seems to call even for serious discussion. A few further words should, perhaps, be said about *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* in view of the noise it has made. It has performed the remarkable feat of bringing out the critics in a body on the side of stronger censorship and—conceivably with more value—it has caused some grave heart-searchings in the trade, who are not beyond understanding that box-office success can sometimes be won at too high a price in the long run. In general, the film is hardly more than a piece of calculated nastiness, a disagreeable excursion into the brutal and vicious, in a spurious American gangster setting.

As might be expected, Shakespeare is not the only playwright to contribute material to the quarter's films. There are three other films-from-plays which require comment. One is a version of Galsworthy's *Escape*, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz—modernised in detail,

streamlined in plot according to formula, and fitted out with a romantic love-affair. The alterations lose half the point of the original theme, which was not only about the imperfections of human justice but was also about class-conflict, and the film, with all its up-to-date additions, has less real speed than the play with its ten short scenes. Chases are, after all, the stock-in-trade of the screen, while they are unusual in the theatre. Still, if the film is no masterpiece, it can claim at least to contain passages which are genuine and moving.

There is also *Miranda*, a light-hearted piece of foolishness about a young doctor who finds a mermaid in Cornwall and brings her home to his wife under the pretence that she is a patient with a leg-ailment, from when on she makes her rounds of the town in a bath-chair breaking gallant hearts. This is plain farce, not fantasy, as witness Miranda the mermaid's unstumbling English, and as farce it must be judged. It is quite neatly done within its slender limits, and affords useful practice for the director, Ken Annakin.

The third of the trio is Cavalcanti's latest effort, *The First Gentleman*, a sardonic portrait of the Prince Regent, played by that accomplished actor Cecil Parker, with the romantic interest focused on his daughter and on her eventual wearing-down of paternal resistance to the marriage of her choice. If one did not know that this was from a stage-play, one could probably guess at it. There is some witty dialogue and there is one outstanding item of characterization, that of Amy Frank as the abandoned and persecuted Caroline; but there are superficialities too (much of the romantic interest is quite superficial), and some odd lapses of the director's hand, as in the first (and least convincing) crowd scene. For better, for worse, this is the Cavalcanti of *Nicholas Nickleby*, not of *North Sea*.

Beyond this point, the British quarter is largely an arid waste, in which even so modest a dramatic essay as *Bond Street* stands out as a sort of oasis. *Bond Street*, directed by Gordon Parry, is made up of four separate episodes, tied together by all taking place in the same area, in the same day and night, and by one or two artificial links. It has a little of everything, from comedy to murder, is variable in quality and totals up to an adequate trifle.

If the desert has only an occasional and parched oasis, it has at least one magnificent mirage, a film which for sheer skill in performing its own allotted functions probably takes first place in the quarter's list. This is the Wilcox-Neagle-Wilding concoction, *Spring in Park Lane*, a box-office target-hitter if ever there was one, and strongly reminiscent in atmosphere of P. G. Wodehouse in his palmy days. Personally, I have nothing but admiration for Herbert Wilcox's dexterity, which increases from film to film; so much so, that I should like to offer him a subject for his next attention. A happy-go-lucky young Duke (Michael Wilding) attires himself in cap and muffler for a bet, and plays a barrel organ in Shepherd's Market in the rain. He is compassionated by a pretty passing milliner (Anna Neagle), who gives him some money and urges him to get a decent job. Further encounters take place, but the cat is let out of the bag when the young Duke attends with his mother at the select millinery establishment in Bruton Street where the girl is employed, and they come face to face in their proper characters. All, however, works out happily in the end. The title of this epic, I suggest, should be *Meeting in Mayfair*. I offer it for nothing in a good cause.

THE STATE INSTITUTE OF CINEMA AND THE FILM ACTORS' THEATRE IN MOSCOW

By

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE

AN EXPERIMENTAL PRODUCTION which has aroused wide interest in the U.S.S.R., *Young Guard*, brings into prominence two pioneer organisations—the State Institute of Cinematography, founded together with the Soviet cinema itself in 1919, and the new Film Actors' Theatre, established in 1944. The film is the first to have been "rehearsed" by means of a preliminary run of its scenario at the Film Actors' Theatre and to have been made by a unit composed largely of undergraduates of the Institute. A few words about both organisations may therefore be appropriate.

From the outset the aims of the Institute have been the study of cinematography as art. It created its own traditions of scholarship and experimentation, and enjoys considerable prestige. Some of the greatest masters of cinema have been associated with it—V. Pudovkin was one of its first graduates; S. Eisenstein was a lecturer for many years until his death last February. One of the Institute's most important functions has been the training of students from the national republics who, returning home as qualified experts, were enabled to develop national cinemas in their own countries.

A FILM UNIVERSITY

During the 29 years of its existence, the Institute has steadily expanded and undergone many a reorganisation. Now it ranks as a university and has six faculties, a department for training critics and historians, the best film collection in the U.S.S.R. which includes unique pictures of the 1895-1900 period, libraries of film literature and a research department which issues works on film history and theory. Housed in a large "Empire" building in a picturesque part of Moscow, the Institute is so equipped as to enable students to combine theoretical work with practice. Besides the auditorium for lectures and a number of separate studies, there are laboratories, workshops and studios where undergraduates go through the various stages of moviemaking. Entrance is by competitive examination.

Students of all faculties receive tuition in certain general subjects, including world history and literature, philosophy or logic, and in the fundamentals of cinema—that is, its history and theory. One foreign language is compulsory. Some of the more special subjects are included in the curriculums of two or more faculties: thus, montage and the rudiments of music are learnt in the directors' and scenarists' faculties, while rhythmic, dancing, elocution and make-up are part of the directors' and actors' courses. As there's hardly a branch of moviemaking that is not a director's business, the directors' course is the most comprehensive. It lasts five years, as does the designers'.

The other courses—actors', scenarists', cameramen's and economists'—take 4½ years.

You may have seen or read about some of the work done by people connected with each of these faculties. The early pioneer L. Kuleshov is a professor in the directors' faculty, and among its graduates, working in individual styles of their own, are S. Vasiliev, director of the severely realistic *Chapaev*, and A. Feinzimmer who made the satirical *Lieutenant Ki-Zhe*.* The largest number of masters, some of them world famous, graduated from the cameramen's faculty. I'll only mention A. Golovnya, who photographed all Pudovkin's films, and that remarkable documentalist R. Karmen, who filmed the Spanish civil war and the Nuremberg trials. The designers' faculty is under the supervision of A. Ptushko, creator of the puppet film *New Gulliver* and of the recent colour film *Stone Flower*, in which you may have noticed the promising work of two of the younger graduates who made their debut in it as art directors. The scenarists' faculty under Professor V. Turkin, like script departments everywhere, it would seem, has had some difficulty in finding talent and evolving a method of training it, and the number of graduates to achieve success like E. Pomeschchikov, author of musical comedy scripts such as *Rich Bride*, is comparatively small.

UNDERGRADUATES

The actors' course is largely an adaptation for the cinema of the famous system created by K. Stanislavsky, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre. Leading stars, such as B. Babochkin (*Chapaev*) and famous directors including S. Yutkevich (*Festival of Youth*) are among the pedagogues. We've recently seen some of the younger graduates: G. Vodyanitskaya, for instance, who played the name part in *Zoya*, the life story of a girl partizan, and N. Alisova, who appeared as the heroine in *Without Dowry* and as the pretty traitress in *Rainbow*.

Undergraduates in the directors' and actors' faculties do most of their practical work together, evolving alternative treatments for various scenes which are later filmed by the student-cameramen. For their final examinations all faculties collaborate in the production of a complete short film. Something of this kind, but on a much bigger scale, was done in the film of A. Fadeev's novel *Young Guard*, a full-length feature which ranks as one of the most important productions since the war. This brings us to the Film Actors' Theatre.

* Prokofiev's witty score for this film has been broadcast by the B.B.C.

Ever since the advent of sound, film actors and directors have felt the need for some place in which to experiment and practise between productions, some place where actors could work out their roles (as do the stage actors in the several studios of the Moscow Art Theatre), trying out their own strength, practising the all-important art of dealing with partners and, above all, finding the dominant tone and style of a forthcoming film as a whole. Rehearsals in the midst of production, it was felt, were not only inadequate artistically, but uneconomical: when once a film is on the floor, time is big money. Already in 1933, L. Kuleshov achieved success by rehearsing the script of his *Great Consoler* as a kind of stage production, and similar preparatory work in a few other instances yielded good results.

THE EXPERIMENT

When, towards the end of the war, the evacuated film units returned to their own quarters and the Soviet cinema was reorganised for reconstruction and expansion under the new five year plan, the first film actors' theatre was established in Moscow. It is a small, intimate theatre, where the actors play as they would before a camera, without exaggerating or raising their voices, that is, they play to each other, not to the audience, which is rather in the position of overhearing pieces of real-life drama. There are two stages, one large, one small, which allow for considerable freedom of action and fluidity. The company consists of some 200 movieactors. Since any one of them is liable to be called away for filming, each production has nearly as many understudies as players, which means fairly frequent opportunities of practice for everybody.

Some of the productions are put on solely as experiments or as practice, training or refresher courses for both actors and directors. Others are intended as preliminaries to a forthcoming film. Before shooting K. Simonov's *Russian Question*, for instance, which deals with pro- and anti-Russian activities in America, M. Romm (director of *Girl 217*) acquainted his cast with the background of their new picture by playing them in an American stage play which dealt with the same period and environment and even had similar characters. The main purpose of the theatre, however, is preparatory work on film scripts accepted for production, and this brings us back to *Young Guard*.

THINKING FOR ONESELF

The film is produced by S. Gerasimov, who, ever since he began directing as a young man between the wars, has concentrated on the theme of youth. One of his best pictures was *New Teacher*. Now, besides moviemaking, he is a professor at the Institute and a director at the Film Actors' Theatre. Fadeev's novel, which is considered the best war story yet written and deals with the selfless partizan work of a youth organisation in Krasnodon, had a particular appeal for Gerasimov, to say nothing of the undergraduates, whose story it is, in a sense, since many of them had gone through experiences similar to those described in the book. Gerasimov's combined class for actors and directors at the Institute began practising on fragments of the novel as soon as it appeared while they were still in their third year.

According to the Institute's guiding principles, the students were always encouraged to think for themselves and to seek the solutions to each creative problem in first-hand observation of real life and in their own experiences. The subject filled them with enthusiasm. In their eyes it represented the best features of their own generation—they identified themselves with the characters. The work gathered momentum and showed outstanding promise. It was decided that the film of *Young Guard* be made by the students themselves at one of the two major studios in Moscow, and that successful participation in it should reckon as graduation from the Institute.

FILM-ON-STAGE

For a venture like this with talented but inexperienced enthusiasts, some sort of preparatory work to make up for the lack of experience was more than ever necessary, and the Film Actors' Theatre was the answer. The script written by Gerasimov together with the students was adjusted for the stage by eliminating some of the mass and outdoor scenes and by compression. The first stage version had 60 scenes which were reduced to the more manageable number of 32 in the final one, but in all essentials the action retained the quality and continuity it was to have in the film. The sets established the atmosphere and, in many cases, the detail for the later film sets. And the cast (mostly students, except for a few adult characters, played by members of the Film Actors' Theatre) had leisure to develop their characterisations exactly as they were to be in the film.

This film-on-the-stage seems to have had exceptional success with the public and critics have written of new qualities of naturalness, simplicity, conviction, depth and atmosphere in terms which make it clear that this cinematic venture has produced a profound impression. When the production went on the floor, shooting proceeded at a hitherto undreamed of speed, and it was estimated that production costs would be halved. If the film is a success (as I write, I have not yet seen it or any reviews of it), the experiment will have indicated a solution to another important problem, that is, the bringing into production of a new generation of moviemakers, without undue delays and without the wastage of initial failures.

POPULAR AND UNPOPULAR

The following results of the Glasgow Film Society plebiscite on films shown during the past season may interest other Societies:—

<i>The Olympiad Festival of the Nations</i> , 1936...	206
<i>The Last Chance</i>	194
<i>Entente Cordiale</i>	73
<i>La Paloma</i>	70
<i>The Oyster Pruners</i>	28
<i>Don Quixote</i>	12
<i>True Heart Susie</i>	8
<i>Your Freedom is at Stake</i>	1

NEW DIRECTORS—WHERE FROM?

By

HAROLD LEONARD

MOVIE-STRUCK PEOPLE, in and out of Hollywood, stars included, have always wanted to be movie directors. But getting to be a director—at least in modern movie times—has been discouraging, if not unheard of. Directing a picture if you could show previous directing experience, maybe. But without “experience”, how to get that first directing assignment with which to get that experience!

Listed below are ten-odd persons who, without previous directorial credits, have in the last year or so acquired one directing credit. Who are they—or what were they? What background, plus what breaks, got them their jobs?

JACK GAGE, director of the just completed *The Velvet Touch*, produced by, and starring, Rosalind Russell, for RKO release, came in via dialogue directing. After no great amount of New York stage managing, less stage directing, Gage was brought to Hollywood in 1941 on a coaching contract, spent the next six years working with such stars as Barbara Stanwyck, Paulette Goddard and Veronica Lake—but more importantly, with Rosalind Russell in *Flight For Freedom*, again in *Sister Kenny* and, once again, in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. So that when Miss Russell, Frederick Brisson (her husband) and writer-director Dudley Nichols set up their own independent producing organization, Gage was there to be included in.

CHARLES WALTERS, like Robert Alton before him, is up from MGM dance directing. Brought from New York at Gene Kelly's request to do dance scenes for Kelly's initial *Du Barry Was a Lady*, Walters stayed on to dance with, and direct scenes for, Judy Garland in *Presenting Lily Mars*, and so on up through Arthur Freed's musical stables until he was staging the whole “Trolley Song” episode in *Meet Me In St. Louis*, finally taking on non-dancing material with the Judy Garland “interview” scene in *Ziegfeld Folies*. *Good News* was Walter's whole-picture first, winning him the whopping *Easter Parade*—Irving Berlin music, Fred Astaire-Judy Garland cast, et al.—as his second.

SEYMOUR FRIEDMAN is a career director. Modestly moving up from assistant director on B's, then A's, to the assignment last fall of location director for the complete Cairo sequence of *To The Ends of the Earth*, Friedman did so well that promotion to full direction on B's followed, and *Boston Blackie's Greatest Adventure* for his very own.

LASLO BENEDEK, on his first time out, could walk into an A-budget assignment like directing Frank Sinatra in *The Kissing Bandit* because of confidence placed in him, no doubt, as a consequence of his extended and strategic association with producer Joe Pasternak. Benedek first met Pasternak in Berlin in 1930, worked with him for UFA there until 1933, then in Vienna and Budapest, 1933-1936; originally a cameraman, at UFA mostly an editor; a writer—by necessity—in over-staffed pre-war England; by 1943 when Benedek rejoined Pasternak in Hollywood, as production associate, he could oversee films straight through production, found this down-the-line experience, plus the

odd directing jobs on retakes, added sequence and second-unit scenes when he often took on for Pasternak, the perfect background for direction.

THE HOP WEST

RUDOLPH MATÉ, cameraman of the immortal *Passion of Joan of Arc* and the less classical *Cover Girl*, *Gilda* and *The Lady from Shanghai*, to name only Hayworths, rather sidled into direction when, keeping his camera post, he manœuvred himself co-director status on Columbia's *It Had To Be You* jointly with producer Don Hartman, with whom he had worked before, as cameraman to Hartman's writer-producer, on *Down To Earth*. P.S. on co-director Hartman: Now at RKO, he is scheduled soon to produce and full-direct *Every Girl Should Be Married*.

NICHOLAS RAY's Hollywood sponsor has been producer John Houseman. Ray first worked with Houseman in war-time OWI radio, went from there to the civilian direction of Houseman Broadway projects *Lute Song* and *Beggar's Holiday*. For his Hollywood apprenticeship, Ray served, among other places, as assistant director to Elia Kazan on *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn*. *Your Red Wagon*, his first film, just completed at RKO, for which he did the adaptation too—an unpretentious little beaut of a film, advance viewers are saying—had Houseman as producer.

BRETAGNE WINDUST, for whom cf. *Winter Meeting*, starring Bette Davis at Warner Bros. (unreleased), is simply the latest of big-time Broadway directors taking the big hop west. With Broadway credits like *State Of The Union*, *Life With Father* and *Arsenic And Old Lace*, Windust's coming was just a matter of time and housing accommodations. As were, for similar reasons, in 1947, George S. Kaufman's (*The Senator Was Indiscreet*) and Martin Gabel's (*The Lost Moment*).

Last year scenarist JAMES EDWARD GRANT became a kind of gentleman director when he and his friend “Duke” (e.g. John) Wayne found themselves getting so enthusiastic over their own ideas for the filming of *Angel And The Bad Man*, a Grant original for Wayne, that they decided to keep right on going, à la Grant directing, Wayne starring and independent-producing (later releasing the picture through Republic), on their corporate own.

F. HUGH HERBERT, with *Scudda-Hoo, Scudda-Hay*, made last summer at Twentieth Century-Fox and just released, is the next to latest screenwriter to succeed in persuading a studio to let him direct the stuff he writes. (Remember Dudley Nichols, Delmer Daves, Billy Wilder, Robert Rossen . . .). CLAUDE BINYON, six weeks into the shooting of *Saxon Charm*, his first job of direction from own script—an assignment he got mainly by talking producer-friend Joe Sistrom into talking Universal-International into letting him take a crack at it—is the latest.



D. W. GRIFFITH DIRECTING LILIAN GISH

From "The Art of the Film"

THE ART OF THE FILM

A Book Review by

ARTHUR VESSELO

A CONSIDERABLE BIBLIOGRAPHY of the cinema has grown up in the last twenty years. Most aspects of the subject have been touched upon at one time or another during the period and, if a fair proportion of the output has consisted of obviously ephemeral matter, on the level of gossip and anecdote rather than of analysis, there have at the same time been a number of contributions of serious intent, historical, technical, social, æsthetic and critical. In the circumstances, it may seem remarkable that there is so little of really solid worth which can be recommended to the enthusiastic novice in what we nowadays call "film appreciation".

Perhaps the lack is not so remarkable as at first appears. The film is still a very young art, and even the sifting of sheer facts about it has often been undertaken in a highly unsystematic way, suggesting that the researcher is uncertain of the basic pattern of his research, and that he is more than half in the dark about what it is that he is trying to

find. This inadequacy of approach is greatly increased the further one adventures into the field of æsthetic judgments. The absence of deep-rooted traditions, the constant sense of change and of trial and error that affects the film medium, tend on the whole to produce in its artistic assessors an unstable alternation between triviality and tendentiousness.

There have been recent signs that some deeper consciousness of form and purpose, some fuller understanding of the factors that have to be considered, are beginning to come genuinely into play in certain quarters. Of these signs the latest and not the least welcome is Ernest Lindgren's book, "The Art of the Film."* The primary audience for Lindgren's book is indicated by the subtitle, "An Introduction to Film Appreciation": but neither this nor the modest claims made by the author in his preface should obscure our realization of what lies behind. The

only sure basis for an introductory work of this sort is sound and comprehensive knowledge, and of such knowledge, allied with a careful and discriminating judgment, Lindgren gives plenty of evidence.

The book is divided into two main sections. The first is a concise and lucid statement of current production-practice in relation to the facilities available. The second, which is much longer (eight chapters as against two), is an analytical survey of the chief artistic problems facing the film-maker. A great part of the survey is justly devoted to editing, and other elements given major attention are sound-technique, camera-work, film music and acting. Finally, there are three appendices: a specimen of a film script, a select list of books, and a glossary of film terms. There is also a useful index. The book is excellently produced, with a large number of illustrations whose choice is admirable. The question of the illustrations is not entirely incidental, since it is the easiest thing in the world for such illustrations to end up by illustrating nothing but the procedures of the still photographer. Here, on the contrary, they go as far to throw additional light on the text as any static pictures ever could.

"The Art of the Film" is a first-rate job of exposition. On the one hand the facts have been assembled with skill

and thoroughness; on the other, the views are presented and argued with a sane detachment differing vastly from the dogmatic wordiness of some writers on the film. Views so rationally presented can be as rationally considered, and even an occasional disagreement need not seem of importance. On most of the points which are made there is not the slightest necessity for disagreement; and, indeed, it is a pleasure to find so clearly and convincingly expounded certain conclusions—as on the use of visual similes and non-naturalistic sound effects—which a select few of us had urged with some emphasis in the past, but which have not always been sufficiently understood by the film-makers.

Because Ernest Lindgren has addressed himself in the first place to beginners, others who are no longer beginners should not for a moment be misled into supposing that there is nothing here for their benefit. There is, in fact, probably nobody who takes an active interest in the cinema, on whatever level, who could not gain something in comprehension of the medium and in the ordering of his ideas from what Lindgren has written.

* "The Art of the Film," by Ernest Lindgren. Allen and Unwin, 1948, 16s.

THE NEW BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

Audiovisual Aids to Instruction, by William Exton, Jr. (New York, McGraw Hill, 1947, 4 dollars).

All the powers engaged in the complexities of the last war made use of ingenious devices to speed and improve training. The United States, faced with the task of building up a huge force in so short a time, developed visual, auditory and mechanical aids on a truly American scale. An account of this development and of the experience gained in the production and use of audiovisual aids is now presented by Captain Exton and others as a text, source and guide for civilian teachers and instructors. There are chapters on films and on graphic, sound and 3-dimensional aids, the last comprising static and working models. "Continued post-war shortages" are mentioned on the title page, but the book is enviably well-printed on fine paper and there are more than 200 photographs, 100 of them full page. It is only a pity that lengths of film could not have been provided as supplementary illustration. Messrs. McGraw Hill have made series of films and filmstrips to go with a number of their textbooks and, since this book is especially directed to the makers and users of training aids, provision of such a series would have been of great value in the present case.

There is an intelligent discussion of the use and misuse of sound-tracks and Captain Exton goes to war against the

influence of Hollywood on instructional films, while recognising in a sensible way that humour and other embellishment are sometimes advisable. Of course not all training films are made to illustrate techniques; fighting men must also be provided with "information, in doctrination and motivation", as in the "Background for War" films. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to check on whether a man has been indoctrinated and motivated or merely bored, whereas it is relatively easy to find out whether the time of training or a task is shortened by using an aid.

The chapter on sound aids contains a section on teaching Morse by recordings and the section on languages is written by no less than the President of Linguaphone Institute. The 3-dimensional aids described range from cardboard cut-outs to the Night Convoy Attack Trainer, which can simulate all the most unpleasant conditions to be found at sea.

One of the chief merits of this book for readers of SIGHT AND SOUND is that it puts films in their proper place among other school aids. Making films can be great fun, but very often static illustrations, gramophone records or models are cheaper and more useful. The experience of American armed forces may not be directly applicable to civilian instruction in Britain, but, as presented here, it is likely to provoke thought and experiment, and the book is not only addressed to the professional producer with big resources.

S. OREANU.

Essenza Del Film. A cura di Fernaldo di Giammatteo. (Turin, Edizioni di "Il Dramma" della Societa Editrice Torinese, 1947).

This anthology consists of articles and extracts from books dealing with various aspects of the cinema. The contributors include Italian, French, German and Central European writers, while Britain is represented by an extract from Roger Manvell's Penguin book, the U.S.A. by a contribution from Robert Flaherty, and Russia by Eisenstein and Pudovchin. The extracts, which cover dates between 1935 and 1947, deal with both general and technical aspects, ranging from the place of the cinema in present-day life to such topics as the task of the producer, montage, and the function of the documentary film.

As the editor says in his preface, the anthology is not intended for an expert public, but aims rather at interesting the ordinary reader who has some general knowledge about the cinema but is less aware of over-all trends and technical problems. In this it seems to succeed very well. The subjects of the extracts are well chosen, and the writers are leading exponents in their various countries and in the film world. A point of interest for British readers is the very preponderant part devoted in a serious book of this kind to examples drawn from Continental, as opposed to British or American, films—the costly and mindless Hollywood type of production is practically ignored.

M. K. GRINDROD

An Introduction to Filmstrips, by H. R. and I. W. Dance. (Harrap, 1948, 2s. 6d.).

This half-crown booklet from Harrap is a valuable addition to the literature of modern educational aids, principally for the technical information it gives about the making of filmstrip material and its projection. Following an introduction which outlines the practical convenience of the filmstrip medium, there are sections about filmstrip, filmslide and the short strip, miniature projectors, the production of filmstrips and a very brief one on the teachers' use of filmstrip. One feels that the authors are heavily biased in favour of the double-frame standard and do not always justly present the case for the single-frame standard. Perhaps this can be justified by the fact that the booklet is obviously intended to give as much help as possible to the amateur maker of filmstrips and amateurs nearly always use the double-frame standard, which is, of course, also that of the Leica and similar cameras. The technical guidance given is good and complete, but it cannot be said that the assistance given to the teacher-user of the filmstrip medium is equally valuable. Whatever may be the final outcome of the single- and double-frame controversy, the teacher will, for some time to come, have to handle a great deal of single-frame material professionally produced and here there is little to tell him how to get the best from this material.

F. E. FARLEY

Chaplin: Last of the Clowns, by Parker Tyler. (New York, Vanguard Press, 1948, 3 dollars).

There are few enough books on the film published in the United States and one should, therefore, be grateful for almost every one that comes along. One feels, however, that one can only recommend this one with reservation, at any rate, to fervent admirers of Chaplin. The method employed by Tyler in his previous *Hollywood Hallucination and Magic and Myth of the Movies* is here again employed to psychoanalyse Chaplin, but it is to be feared that Tyler has this time overreached himself: what we have here is, perhaps, not so much a portrait of Chaplin as a revelation of Mr. Tyler's pet obsessions. He can take famous Chaplin gags and trace their antecedents to horrifying origins (which seem more or less arbitrary), and he can trace the source of The Tramp's accoutrements to the fact that it is a fore-shortened view of a gentleman as seen by a small child (which seems clever and sharply observed, but without special significance). Of sympathy for Chaplin as man and artist, however, there is surprisingly very little. The book reads like a psychiatric monograph, written with a cool detachment, and is yet another illustration of Tyler's undeniable talent as a psychologist. But psychology can lead one along devious paths. To me the best criticism of this curious study seems to be supplied by the same gag in a Chaplin film (*The Pawnbroker*), that Dr. Hanns Sachs, a former pupil of Freud, once used good humouredly to criticise the general

method of applied psychoanalysis. A man comes to pawn an alarm clock. Chaplin, as the pawnbroker's assistant, opens the back of the clock with a can-opener and spills all the insides of the clock, springs, screws, etc., out upon the counter. He then picks up several of them and examines them through the small jeweller's magnifying glass stuck in his eye. The man watches the mysterious course of these professional movements with awe. Finally Chaplin removes the glass from his eye, takes the man's hat from his head, sweeps all the insides of the clock into it and returns it to him with a pessimistic shake of the head. The clock is no good, it is not worth anything. The empty husk of the clock remains upon the counter. The man sadly takes the insides of the clock, still contained in the hat, and dejectedly leaves, convinced, after this impressive demonstration, that the clock is indeed worthless.

One fears that this is what Tyler has tried to do to Chaplin in this book. He has technique enough to argue a bone out of a bulldog's mouth, but that does not necessarily prove that the bulldog should not have been permitted to retain the bone in the first place.

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

Schatten Erobern Die Welt: Wie Film und Kino Wurden, by Friedrich Porges. (Basel, Verlag für Wissenschaft, Technik und Industrie, 1946).

This is not a book for those who take their cinema seriously. The title, "Shadows Conquer the World" is, in itself, a preliminary warning; the chapter headings—"The Sultan on his Deathbed"; "Edison has a bad Day"; "Fate for 20 Francs"—are another. What is more, the author makes his intention perfectly plain when he says in the preface: "This is not a dry, factual history of the cinema, which should be called 'From Shadow-Play to Television'; what is to be related here begins with a history of a chance happening and its results" . . .

The book is in effect a series of short anecdotes, described with a wealth of apocryphal detail and improbable dialogue, and designed to establish certain outstanding features of the pedigree of the cinema—a long one, if you derive it, as the author does, from the chance discovery and development of the Chinese shadow plays.

It is useless to decry a book for not being something which it never set out to be, but even a "popular" book may treat its subject seriously within its own convention and need not necessarily adopt such a mixture of triviality and facetiousness. It is said that all books have their potential public and perhaps it is for this one that the bobby-soxers of Switzerland are eagerly waiting. But perhaps not.

NORAH LEWIS

Histoire Encyclopédique du Cinéma. I. Le Cinéma Français, 1895-1929, by René Jeanne and Charles Ford. (Paris, Laffont, 1947).

The surest sign of the importance of the cinema is doubtless the great number

of serious books which have been written about it. This new history, of which the first volume has now been published, will consist of four parts, which will deal with the entire history from 1895-1945. In this first volume the authors give a very clear and highly interesting picture of the evolution of the French cinema, not only with respect to the different films, directors and actors, but also to the whole atmosphere in which this evolution took place. There are also some amusing details about the Americans, how they tried as early as 1897 to get the monopoly of the cinema by prohibiting the Lumières' representative from working with their invention in the States.

Every country is inclined to exaggerate the part it has played in the evolution of this new art, but M.M. Jeanne and Ford at least spare us the description of such minor events as the first time a moving camera was used or the making of the first close-up. They deal not with the technical but with the more academic side and here France has made a great contribution. In 1907, Edmond Benoit-Levy was already taking a lively interest in the cinema and he was followed by many other intellectuals and artists.

France has always been a country of individualists, and the cinema has profited greatly from this fact. The so-called *avant garde*, headed by two people of the standard of Germaine Dulac and Louis Delluc, was composed of a company of idealists, who had to work under very difficult conditions, but who, in spite of this, laid the foundations of the great period of the French sound film.

The authors of the book write not as critics but as historians and try to give as objective a judgment as possible of these thirty-four years of history: even in this short space of time the cinema has definitely made history, which is already repeating itself. The main change for the better in the French cinema occurred during the 1914-18 war, when the importance of what we now call the documentary was revealed through films made on the battlefields. After the war the cinema came in for a hard time, and the authors make a strong attack on the Americans, whom they accuse of infiltrating into the French market by creating legal French companies with American money. This is reminiscent of similar attacks made upon Great Britain to-day.

The book is written in a fluent, simple style without being condescending and is interesting not only for its information on the cinema but also for the picture of French intellectual life behind it. It is well-illustrated and has an index of names. There is one surprising omission: The Passion of Joan of Arc is just mentioned, but neither the name of Dreyer nor of Falconetti is to be found anywhere. Otherwise there are good biographies of most directors and actors, and it is certainly a most useful book for the study of the French silent cinema.

RAGNA JACKSON

Le Mirage du Cinema, by Sammy Beracha. (Paris, S.E.P.E., 1947).

The sub-title of this little book is "Introduction to the Aesthetics and a Social Survey of the Seventh Art", and it consists of a series of essays on the various aspects of the cinema. The author wrote these notes during the occupation without any intention of publishing them, but it is fortunate that he changed his mind, because many of his ideas are original and interesting, although one is very often inclined to disagree with him. He starts with the question as to whether the cinema is really the seventh art and uses most of the book to discuss this point, making, in so doing, interesting comparisons with the other arts throughout the last 3000 years. He tries to imagine how the different cultures would have treated this strange invention with all its fantastic possibilities. He is obviously annoyed with the Americans and especially with their sound films, but he admits that they have a natural genius for films. In spite of all his dissatisfaction with the cinema at present, with the low standard demanded by audiences, in spite of his fierce attack on film critics, he comes to the conclusion that film really *is* art, so that "tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur du monde".

RAGNA JACKSON

New Theatres for Old, by Mordecai Gorelik. (Dennis Dobson, 1947, 25s.).

The author is one of the foremost scenic artists in America, and in this book, he combines his great practical experience with an extensive research into the history and development of stage and screen techniques. He traces the "conventional" method of theatrical production, with its emphasis on the presence of the stage platform, to the Attic theatre and the traditional plays of China. This style persisted, with certain modifications, in the Elizabethan and Restoration playhouses. The challenge came from the Naturalistic school of Zola, Antoine and Stanislavsky, who, in their endeavours to obliterate the platform and entrance the audience into the belief that they were no longer within a theatre, created the "illusory" method. At the time when Belasco was the chief exponent of Naturalism in America, the cinema was just emerging, and his influence has affected the whole trend of the motion picture. Between the World Wars great forces were at work in the Continental theatres and the author gives an account of the brief reigns of Symbolism, Expressionism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and in Russia of Socialist Realism. In Germany the Epic form, practised by Piscator and Brecht, with its insistence on scientific and non-illusory methods, became a powerful force, until cut short by Hitler. These anti-fascist theatres have given considerable inspiration to certain sections of the American theatre. The American cinema still remains a stronghold of emotional drama but it shows some fine examples of Epic technique.

The book was published in 1940, and British films receive but a bare mention. It is very fully annotated and contains an extensive bibliography and many illustrations.

JOYCE CUTLER

Charade, by John Mortimer. (Lane, 1947, 7s. 7d.).

To those who know little about the film world, this novel is very revealing. Mr. Mortimer has a sense of humour, and his ironic portrayal of the director, the script-writer, the unfortunate sergeant and the other members of the Action Film Unit leaves one in no doubt as to his own ideas on the film fraternity. He has, too, a knack of vivid metaphor, as, for example, in his delightful description of a sunrise: "A pale sun appeared over the clouds like an invalid sitting up in bed". The story itself is intriguing, though perhaps a trifle involved. This is a good book for a wet Sunday afternoon, and a warning to all who are thinking of becoming *Assistant Film Directors*!

JENNIFER SMITHELLS

The Film Hamlet: A Record of its Production, edited by Brenda Cross. (Saturn Press, 1948, 7s. 6d.).

This book forms a record of the making of that much discussed film, *Hamlet*, from the points of view of several of the most important participants. Laurence Olivier himself, writes of the film as "An Essay on Hamlet", and gives some indication of the lines on which the production was carried out. There are fourteen other articles, including one on Design and Costumes, by Roger Furse, illustrated by reproductions of some of his costume sketches, and one on Hamlets—modern and ancient, by Alan Dent, text editor, in which he recalls many illustrious stage figures, who have played the part of Hamlet in the past. The book is fully illustrated, chiefly by reproductions of photographs taken during the shooting of the film. This is an interesting publication and seems to lack for the most part that superficiality which characterises so much of what is written about the films and many of the articles give a real insight into the authors' work and evidence of the assiduity and enthusiasm which was put into it. Full cast and credits are given at the end of the book.

Ourselves and the Cinema, by S. B. Carter. Topics for Discussion, No. 17. (Workers' Educational Association, 1948, 6d.).

This pamphlet consists of a comprehensive survey of the cinema to-day. There are sections on the Filmgoer, the Film Business, the Film as an Art, the Film as an Advocate and discusses whether films help to make a better world. It also indicates the lines on which further study can be carried out. It seems to presuppose that the reader has little knowledge of the subject and each point broached is lucidly defined and explained. The pamphlet should prove ideal as an aid in the promotion of discussion.

London 200 Years Ago, by W. Crawford Snowden. **Look and Learn: The New Pictorial Encyclopædia**. (*Daily Mail*, 1948. Both 7s. 6d.).

We have received copies of the two above publications. The second contains a section on "How a Film is Made", by Jympson Harman, which is illustrated by 28 photographs and these, together with the description printed underneath, form a graphic and surprisingly detailed survey, considering the brevity of the section, of the making of a film.

Films to Inspire. (G. B. Equipments, 1948).

In the introduction to this brochure, it is maintained that "Films are among the most powerful formative influences upon young people at the present time. Realising that fact, more and more Ministers, Youth Leaders and others . . . are making use of films in their work". Several films, included in the G.B. Film Library, are then cited as being made for entertainment but also as containing a lesson.

Film Strip Projectors. (Photographic Dealers' Association, 1948).

This brochure, which has been compiled by the Cine Section of the Photographic Dealers' Association, is "a brief summary of the functions of Film Strip Projectors and Film Strips and how they can assist the teacher, lecturer, doctor and industrialist in imparting knowledge". It contains sections on what a film strip projector is, the purpose of film strip projectors, their advantages, where to obtain them, requirements for them, and also on film strips and other visual aids. There is a lens chart at the end.

Watching Films, by Vernon Sproxton. (Student Christian Movement Press, 1948, 2s.).

This little book consists of a section devoted to a general survey of the cinema, of another on the language of the film, another on being your own film critic. The fourth and last section, the Christian approach to cinema, is evidently the most important part of the book. "Very few secular critics would disagree strongly with the main points we have made", writes the author, at the beginning of this section, ". . . We shall find that in many ways there is nothing to distinguish Christian from any other intelligent criticism of the cinema, but the Christian stands apart from other filmgoers, because he asserts that his standard of judgment is the Truth, which was revealed in Jesus Christ". He then discusses true and false values in films and, in conclusion, writes: "Let us go to the cinema discriminatingly, supporting the good, avoiding the shoddy. And let us hereby remember that Christians in all ages have used the prevalent art forms to express their faith. . . . The film is an art form which is no less susceptible to the same faith". This last section of the book forms an interesting exposition of views on the cinema from the religious point of view.

Index de la Cinématographie Française, 1947. (Paris, Cinématographe Française, 1947, 500 frs.).

This useful reference book consists of synopses, estimates, casts, credits, with illustrations, of all long and short films released in France between January, 1946, and October, 1947, an alphabetical list of French shorts for the same period, a list of 35mm. and 16mm. films in general distribution on 1st October, 1947, and their distributors, a list of books, and other valuable information.

National Film Awards, 1948. (Dennis Yates, 1948, 2s. 6d.).

This booklet describes the leading films, actors and actresses in the ballot organised by the "Daily Mail". It is illustrated.

Cine Almanach Prisma, compiled by P. Boyer and P. Faveau. (Paris, Prisma, 1947).

The compilers of this book had intended for a long time to bring together the knowledge which they had accumulated during twenty years study of the cinema. The present volume is the outcome of this idea. They realise that it is not perfect, its necessarily restricted size and the difficulties of present conditions have obliged them to keep a large part of their material in reserve. It should, however, be of great use to technicians. Most of the book is devoted to a technical dictionary, illustrated by photographs, stills from films and diagrams. This is followed by lists of makes of camera, stock and projectors and a calendar for cine enthusiasts, which gives technical directions for photography for each month of the year.

Histoire du Cinema, by Lo Duca. (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1947).

This is the third edition of this concise little history, the first of which appeared in 1942. As the writer states in his introduction, a history of the cinema should by rights consist of a volume of a thousand pages, but this would be a work of erudition, which would only have an appeal for a limited public. This history, however, is intended to give a clear picture without in any way sacrificing truth. The book includes chapters on the beginnings of the cinema, on the development of the cinema up to the present time, on cinema directors, on cinema stars and on the animated cartoon, on which last the author has just published a complete book (see review below). The book is illustrated by caricatures of screen personalities. There is a bibliography at the end.

A Short History of English Drama, by B. Ifor Evans. (Penguin Books, 1948, 1s. 6d.).

We have received a copy of this excellent short history, by Professor Evans, who is a member of the Board of Governors of the British Film Institute. The author not only traces the history of our theatre from its beginnings to the present time, but also shows how its development has been hindered and advanced in the past and gives his opinion of its prospects for the future. It seems a *tour de force* to have provided so clear and full a survey within the limits of so short a book.

Le Dessin Animé: Histoire, Esthétique, Technique, by Lo Duca. (Paris, Prisma, 1948).

This book has an introduction by Walt Disney, in which he draws attention to the almost unlimited scope and potentialities of the animated cartoon. The book itself is an ambitious work, describing as it does in detail all sides of the subject. In his first chapter, the author gives an account of the inventions which foreran the animated cartoon. He makes a survey of the work of Emil Cohl and Winsor McKay, which is followed by a chapter on the period beginning with Felix the Cat and ending with Mickey Mouse. There is a critical appreciation of the various types of German, British, Italian, Russian and other European cartoons and

the next section, naturally the largest, deals with the cartoon in the United States. There is an interesting chapter on the aesthetics of the subject. The author writes that Disney was once described by someone as the Raphael of bad taste without, of course, defining what good taste is; on the other hand, another critic deigned to acknowledge that Disney has rendered the ridiculous sublime. The author has great hopes of the animated cartoon, which he believes will perhaps turn out to be the most poetic discovery of the century. He compares a Doré illustration from the *Inferno* with a still from Disney's *Snow White*, which seems to be going rather far. The last chapter is devoted to the technique of cartoon-making, of which the author gives a detailed and fascinating account. The book is excellently produced and beautifully illustrated both in the text and by coloured plates. It should form an important addition to the literature of the animated cartoon.

This Year of Films, compiled by Ion Hammond. (Dewynters, 1948, 5s.).

This book seems to consist chiefly of illustrations, which are mostly stills from British and American films and of portraits of film stars, rather indistinctly reproduced on what appears to be somewhat indifferent paper. The letterpress is for the most part devoted to quotations from the critics of various papers, introduced by Ion Hammond.

Films in Business and Industry, by Henry Clay Gipson. (New York, McGraw Hill, 1947, 4 dollars).

"This book", writes the author, "is designed not only to tell when and how to use films but to give a basic understanding of the grammar of the film—the how and why of film construction". He traces the progress of the sponsored film from its beginnings in 1897 to the present time, discusses the question of the non-theatrical film and slide film as a means of industrial communication, also how films may be used within an organisation and the use of the film as a salesman. The book includes chapters on the cost of a film, selecting and supervising the producer, on the script, photographing the film, animation, sound, editing, screening and finally on television and the motion picture. There is a glossary of technical terms at the end. The book is well produced and fully illustrated. It should prove a useful, non-technical manual for anyone who is contemplating the production of industrial films.

Filmlexikon: Piccola Enciclopedia

Cinematografica, compiled by Francesco Pasinetti. (Milan, Filmeuropa, 1948).

This lexicon, which is based on the *Kleines Filmlexikon*, by Charles Reinert, previously reviewed in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, is divided into two parts, the first consisting of a general and technical dictionary, the second of a who's who. This is followed by a very full bibliography of the literature of the film. The book is well produced and excellently illustrated, both in the text and by plates. It is over 700 pages in length, contains a vast amount of information and should prove invaluable as a work of reference.

Inventors' Scrapbook, by Egon Larsen. (Lindsay Drummond, 1948, 12s. 6d.).

"Is it enough to have a good idea once in a lifetime, or is it still true what Edison said: that inventive genius is nothing but 2 per cent. inspiration and 98 per cent. perspiration?" Mr. Larsen has tried to answer this question in his book. He gives in a lively and popular style short histories of some of those inventions, which have added comfort to our lives or stimulated our imaginations. These include the cinema and this short account, well illustrated and made additionally vivid by anecdote, will probably be of interest to many, particularly perhaps to boys. The idea nowadays that in the 'nineties, when one cine operator gave six performances a night, "this was only done by using a handsome cab, and many Londoners could watch the nightly spectacle of a cab racing along the streets, with filmbands streaming in the wind, while the passenger was re-winding the reels with all his might", seems bizarre to say the least of it.

The Audio-Visual Projectionist's Handbook. (Chicago, Business Screen, 1947. 1 dollar.)

This brochure shows, chiefly by means of diagrams, a room layout for good projection, the parts common to all 16 mm. projectors and to the sound filmstrip projector, the projectionist's job, what must be done before the showing, to start the picture, during the showing, to end the picture and after the showing. There are also diagrams to demonstrate maintenance, lubrication, splicing, and much other useful information is given.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Eisenstein Commemoration Programme

Readers of *SIGHT AND SOUND* may like to know that copies of the booklet prepared for the Eisenstein Commemoration Programme can still be obtained either from the British Film Institute or from the Society for Cultural Relations with U.S.S.R., 14, Kensington Square, W.8 at 2/6d. each. The booklet is a quarto publication of twenty-eight pages containing a foreword by Paul Rotha, a biographical note by Ivor Montagu and articles by John Grierson, Marie Seton and Herbert Marshall; it is illustrated with eighteen stills from Eisenstein's films.

CHANCE FOR NEW COMPANY

Writer-director-contributor to this publication—European and American background—is getting tired of his job with major Hollywood studio. Would like to help build-up young unconventional production abroad. Write Box A.1, c/o *SIGHT AND SOUND*.

FILM ADVISER wanted by Girl Guides' Association for part-time work on 16 mm. silent films. Knowledge of editing essential, experience of production an advantage. Apply to the General Secretary, 17-19, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

FIFTY NATIONS

are represented among the members of
the British Film Institute who share a
belief in the future of the film. For
full information, please write to:

164 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE
LONDON, W.C.2

The British Film Institute

—an independent organisation financed through H.M. Privy Council



Caesar and Cleopatra

Eagle-Lion

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

What does Membership offer?

Full membership costs you £2 2s. a year. For it you will get SIGHT AND SOUND, the MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN and all our other publications free of charge

Reduced rates for hire of films from the National Film Library

Unlimited information and the use of our lending library of books

But, above all, your subscription will reinforce the Institute's policy of encouraging the development of the film as an art form and as an educational medium